MEN IN WOMEN'S GUISE

MADEMOISELLE LA CHEVALIÈRE D'EON DE BEAUMONT, 1787

From the portrait by R. Cosway, R.A. Engraved by Thomas Chambers.

MEN IN WOMEN'S GUISE. SOME HISTORICAL INSTANCES OF FEMALE IMPERSONATION. BY O. P. GILBERT. TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY ROBERT B. DOUGLAS

"Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much."

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY, if agreeably narrated, is not remote from literary art, and may afford us some varied delights. Time throws a light veil over facts which in their brutal nakedness would shock us, and so renders them supportable. Lapses of memory on the part of some and partiality in others, change the appearance of events in a most incredible manner, and the result of this double action is that a fact is sometimes transformed into the exact opposite of what it originally was; and for that reason some have maintained that history cannot be regarded as a science—a theory that demands examination.

Science endeavours to advance by experimental methods; starting with known facts and a certain number of admitted laws, the scientist tries to discover new facts which experiment may reveal as possibly existing. Experiment definitely decides the predictions of reason, or theoretically should do so, but it often happens that some unforeseen fact, arising from a chance observation, may lead to a fresh line of research.

Many sciences exist only in observation, experiment being impossible. It is as a spectator that the

astronomer regards the existence and the movements of distant nebulæ, and he has nothing to aid him but a series of minute observations made by his predecessors or himself. But unalterable laws bind together in a harmonious whole the entire universe, and the same causes are everywhere and always followed by the same effects, and thus it comes to pass that in a table of dry arithmetical figures, the astronomer can read not only the past history of our universe but also the future.

The student of humanity is in much the same position. The sociologist can make but few experiments, except in regard to minor details of human evolution; but observations carefully registered during long periods furnish data and facts, and in this department history becomes of great value. In history, the sociologist, the anthropologist and the psychologist find the necessary materials for the elaboration of their theories, and the proof or the refutation of their hypotheses. On the other hand, science provides history with a possibility of attaining a greater degree of objectivity. As the knowledge of mankind increases, it furnishes the historian with the means of knowing more precisely the true aspect of an epoch. Medical and psychological information could explain to a Michelet the whims and caprices of Louis XIV. Thus there is an action and a reaction; history is aided by several sciences, and they without her would lose much of their importance.[1]

[1] On this subject, see *Totem and Taboo*, by S. Freud. Paris, 1923.

One result of this curious situation is that it makes the researches of the historian particularly arduous. To collect information from all sources, determine its real value, and co-ordinate facts that are often contradictory, are so many obstacles which the historian must overcome. But it cannot be denied, however, that to re-animate a bygone era, and restore to it its colour, animation, intelligence and life is as much a real creation as a science or an art.

Men in Women's Guise makes no such great pretensions. We have more especially tried to bring together some facts connected with a point forgotten by the psychologists—the desire of certain men to pass as women—the insane longing of some women to masquerade as men.[1] In spite of its interest, this question has never been considered otherwise than as a secondary manifestation of sexual inversion.

The personages studied in this book (Abbé de Choisy, Chevalier d'Éon, etc.) have not left us any important data as to their exact psychology, but the documents which we possess are sufficient to allow us to make inferences and deductions. After reading the *Memoirs of Choisy*, Raffalovitch said :

" The Abbé de Choisy was an effeminate being, not a 'uranist.' "[2] Though one of the prettiest women of his day in appearance, he was a man of sound mind and normal condition, but his beauty,

[1] This latter will form the subject of a future volume.

[2] *Uranism.* Nom sous lequel, en médecine légale, on désigne l'inversion sexuelle (appétit sexuel pour des personnes de même sexe).

and the education he received from his mother, gave him a second nature which did not correspond with his sexual desires.

The career of the Chevalier d'Éon began in much the same manner. He appeared in woman's attire at a fancy-dress ball, and was not inferior in good looks to the prettiest young women of the Court of Louis XV. He was afterwards sent to Russia as a secret agent, and was appointed "lady reader" to the Empress Elizabeth.[1] Returning to France, he joined a regiment of dragoons; and a little later, he visited England. When he came back to France, Louis XV condemned him—for some mysterious reason which still remains obscure—to pass as a woman, though he was then forty-four years of age. D'Éon accepted the situation to prevent himself from starving, but he made a great fuss about it, and for years he pestered the Ministers with petitions that he might be allowed to assume male attire; but when the Revolution came, and he was free to put off what he called his "Nessus' shirt," he still remained a woman!

His case is extremely curious, owing to the slow psychological transformation which it reveals. It must not be concluded that such a metamorphosis could happen to anybody, but in Choisy and d'Éon there were no doubt moral and physical dispositions to play the part they did.

[1] Andrew Lang, in *Historical Mysteries*, says, "Few now believe that he, d'Éon, in 1755 accompanied Douglas as that gentleman's pleasing young niece."—Translator.

These cases, in which the individuality of the subject seems to pass suddenly or slowly from one sex to the other, and sometimes return to the former, are a valuable subject of study to the psychologist.

We may be on the eve of making some discovery anent unconscious sexual tendencies, but as yet, despite the work already done, we are but at the commencement of our labours. Perhaps we may after all overshoot the mark, and our disinterested researches may not even have a bookish interest; for the beings who possess this double personality are tortured by a sense of their own shame, and suffer severe mental anguish. Human suffering exists eternally. If there is an inexorable desire to be a man or a woman, and to wish it with all one's heart and soul, ought we to shrug our shoulders contemptuously because the wish appears to us cowardly or childish?

There are many unhappy persons to whom life is a weary load, and whose heart is heavy with an inexpressible tenderness because they have not the personality they desire; because their brain and heart belong to a sex which is not their own. Science calls them sick-folk; but if they were nothing more than sick-folk at least they could be cured.

Before closing this Introduction, we wish to thank M. M. Duvean and Gabriel E. Monod-Herzen for the assistance they have given; the first in the arrangement of the documents employed, and the second for the scientific notes.

O. P. G.

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ABBÉ DE CHOISY

(1644-1724)

CHAPTER I

(1644–1662)

A master in the art of disguise—Birth of Choisy—Madame de Choisy —A boy brought up as a girl—Philip of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV—Choisy becomes an Abbé—An Abbé who plays *ingénues*.

FRANCOIS TIMOLÉON DE CHOISY was a past-master in the art of disguise, and possessed all the attractions of a very pretty woman. He was acquainted with everything that could set off a woman's charms. He dressed like a thorough coquette. Accustomed from childhood to wear petticoats, dresses, corsets and caps, he took great delight in putting them on; he talks about it with the utmost complacency and spares no details.

"I had," writes the Abbé, "a bodice embroidered with natural flowers on a silver ground, the skirt of the same material with a long train; the skirt was fastened up on both sides with yellow and silver ribbons, with a large bow at the back to mark the waist; the bodice was very high and padded out to make believe that I had a bust, and, as a matter of fact, I had as much as a young girl of fifteen.

"From my childhood, they had made me wear

bodices that were extremely tight, and this had pushed up the flesh which was fat and plump. I also took great care of my neck, rubbing it every night with veal broth and a pomade of sheeps'-foot oil, which makes the skin soft and white.

" My black hair was done into large curls ; I had big diamond ear-rings, a dozen patches, a necklace of false pearls that were quite as good as real ones, for no one seeing me with so much jewellery would have believed that I was wearing anything false.

" I had exchanged at Paris my diamond cross, which I did not like, for five ornamental pins that I placed in my hair, which I also decorated with yellow and silver ribbons, which went very well with my black hair. No head-dress, for it was June ; a large mask which covered both cheeks to prevent sunburn, white gloves and a fan. Such was my get-up, and no one would have ever guessed that I was not a woman."

His bedroom also is essentially feminine :

" My apartment was magnificent ; my bed was of crimson and white damask, the hangings, window-curtains, and door-curtains of the same ; a large pier-glass, three large mirrors, and a glass over the mantelpiece ; china ornaments, Japanese cabinets, and some pictures in gold frames. Mantelpiece of white marble, a glass chandelier, seven or eight plates on which lighted candles were placed in the evening ; a ' duchess ' bed, the curtains held back by ribbons of white taffetas ; lace-edged sheets,

three large pillows, and three or four small ones, the corners tied up with flame-coloured ribbons."

No one disapproved of his masquerade. He was well received in the best society; ladies copied his toilettes, and young girls did their hair in the same way that he did. Except for some small adventures —of no great importance—Choisy was as staid and virtuous as a holy friar. He was too much occupied by his own beauty to interest himself much in that of others. His behaviour was not open to reproach; he gave money to the poor; went to Mass; and thought himself—although a male—the most charming female in the world.

Later in life—when he was thirty-two years of age—he abandoned feminine attire and became the Ambassador of Louis XIV in Siam; honours rained upon him; he entered the Academy. But all this did not satisfy him, and during all his life he regretted the delightful time when with his waist tightly strapped in a corset, his breast uncovered, and the long curls falling artfully upon his shoulders, he felt himself envied by the women and admired by the men.

. . . . . .

As to the motives which gave birth to this desire to appear as a woman, Abbé Choisy has tried to furnish an explanation.

"I have tried to find out how such a strange pleasure came to me, and I take it to be in this way.

It is an attribute of God to be loved and adored, and man—so far as his weak nature will permit—has the same ambition ; and as it is beauty which creates love, and beauty is generally woman's portion, when it happens that men have, or believe they have, attractions for which they may be loved, they try to increase them by putting on woman's attire, which is very advantageous for that purpose. Then they feel the inexpressible pleasure of being loved. I have had that pleasant experience many a time, and when I have been at a ball or theatre, in a beautiful dress, and with patches and diamonds, and I have heard some one near me whisper, ' There is a pretty woman ! ' I have felt a pleasure so great that it is beyond all comparison. Ambition, riches, even love cannot equal it, because we always love ourselves more than we love others."

This explanation appears to be too fanciful. From the psychological point of view, it teaches us nothing. We must certainly confess that the desire to show off such beauty as one possesses is a feeling that is quite as much masculine as feminine. But it does not seem apparent that a disguise is necessary to show off beauty ; though, of course, androgynous types are an exception to the rule.

Moreover, it seems evident that, owing to psycho-physiological reasons that we cannot now discover, the Abbé showed an astonishing predisposition to play the part that his mother imposed upon him.

On the other hand, when Choisy writes, " What

a strange thing a childish habit is, it is impossible to get rid of it," he was stating a truth. Habits learned in infancy, even if they are contrary to the natural inclination of the individual (which does not seem to have been the case in this instance) make a profound impression throughout the whole life. According to Raffalovich nothing is more hurtful to the sexual life of the child than the trouble caused by education. D'Alembert,[1] long before the scientific men of our own day, had made a similar remark:

"His mother, by whom he was adored (for both in mind and body he was equally lovable) thought she could increase the beauty of his appearance by giving him garments which were not those of his sex, and still less of his condition, and which the frivolous indulgence of the French nation too freely allowed him to wear. This kind of taste, which he long preserved, for a disguise so strange and so blameable, is a sad proof of the evil empire which certain minds retain for the first foolish habits with which a bad education has infected them."

François Timoléon de Choisy was born at Paris, 16th August, 1644; he had three brothers and two sisters, and was the youngest of the family. His mother, daughter of M. de Belesbat, and granddaughter of the Chevalier de l'Hôpital, belonged to the celebrated family of Harault. She was born in or near the year 1604, married 8th February, 1628,

[1] D'Alembert. *Eloge de M. de Choisy.*

to Jean de Choisy, member of the Council of Parliament, *Maître des Requêtes*, Intendant of Champagne, etc., and Chancellor of the Duke of Orleans. She was left a widow in 1660, and died in 1666.

Jean de Choisy was not a remarkable personage, but on the other hand, Madame de Choisy deserves some mention. We may be pardoned therefore if we leave aside her son for a short time whilst we talk about, or rather listen to what Tallemant des Reaux has to say :

" Madame de Choisy is the sister of Belesbat ; Choisy, who is now the Chancellor of the Duke of Orleans, married her for the sake of alliance with a good family ; but he did not gain much by it, though the *maltotte*[1] made his father rich.

" She has been pretty, is witty, and talks well. She is very lively, fond of amusement, and is rather an original in certain ways. In the early days of the Regency, she so pleased Cardinal Mazarin that one day, being at Marshal d'Estrées' house, he said, 'What ! you are amusing yourselves here and Madame de Choisy is not present ! How can there be any amusement without her ? ' "

It is said that only once was she put out of countenance. She was not on very good terms with la Rivière, and it happened that he, de Tamponneau and his wife, and the late Mlle. de Belesbat had arranged to dine at the house of Goulas. Mme. de Choisy was dying of envy to be of the party ; she

[1] *Maltotte*, a tax levied without legal authority.

did not know how to manage it ; but boldly resolved to try, and not to be put off, whatever people might say, and she succeeded, although la Rivière teased her so unmercifully that Mlle. de Belesbat came to her assistance and used very violent language to la Rivière, and pacified Mme. de Choisy. Some young woman, who was not over discreet, had told Mme. de Choisy that she was not treated with sufficient honour. "You will see how I make myself respected," was the reply. La Rivière and the others heard of this ; they gave her a large arm-chair, served her in a *cadenas*[1] and left two vacant places between her and the others, and she received all this without any surprise as being only what was due to her. In the middle of the repast, after they had paid her every kind of deference, la Rivière and Goulas rose, glass in hand, and said, "To thee, Choisy!" which disconcerted her completely.

She called her eyes "her conquerors." One day when she went to see Mme. de Vendôme, who was a bit of an idiot, she excused herself for not having come before to pay her respects, on the ground that "her conquerors" had been bad. The worthy princess thought she meant her horses, and asked, "What was the matter with them, Madame? Had they the glanders?"

[1] A kind of square plate, used with knife and fork or spoon. One of the edges is raised by two finger-breadths, and has compartments for salt, pepper and sugar, with a small lid to cover them. These plates were formerly used by kings and princes, and are now by dukes and noblemen (Furetières).

When she found many visitors at her house, she would say, "There are too many of you; some of you had better go." Once she sent away two gentlemen who were calling upon her for the first time. But nothing she did seemed amiss. One day she ordered her butler to bring her a tart, and when it came, she eat it without offering any to the other guests. When she had eaten enough, she said, "There is still some left; eat it if you like." She told people frankly, "You don't suit me; if I can get used to you, I will let you know." And she did as she said.

She met Comte de Roussy—a very serious and solemn gentleman—and the following day he knocked at her door. She put her head out of the window: "Monsieur le Comte, I saw you yesterday and that is enough; I have business with this gentleman here!" "This gentleman" was a boy of fifteen; but she was never the subject of any scandal. She boldly said to people, "How long is it since you saw me? You come a little too often!"

Gerzé served her a trick one day. He carried off a letter that he found upon her table, addressed to Princess Marie. He had it printed, and sent a man to cry before the door, "Here is the letter of Mme. de Choisy to Princess Marie." Gerzé called upon her, and found her in a terrible rage. He told her that she was quite right, for things of that sort ought not to be permitted. She believed that Princess Marie had played her a trick, but finally, the truth came out, and she was so delighted to find that she

had not to complain of the Princess that she willingly forgave Gerzé.

A letter from Naples said that a well-known leader of Society had been killed during the disorders in that city. "Ah!" she said, "the Choisy of Naples is dead."

Being at a ball given by Mme. d'Angoulême the younger—who was young enough to be her daughter—she said to her, "It must be owned that the blondes shine most here, but we brunettes have the greatest charm." And she said that in the most serious manner.

Mme. de Choisy was more than forty-three years of age when her son was born, and naturally she felt a singular tenderness for a child who seemed to bring back her youth.

By a strange caprice (perhaps the future abbé had more of the girl than the boy about him) Mme. de Choisy did not allow François Timoléon to be put into breeches when he attained the proper age. His mother saw in him, during both his infancy and his youth, nothing more than a pretty doll to be dressed, undressed, and have his hair done. Besides which Mme. de Choisy, who was not wanting in shrewdness in bringing up her son, was imitating the education given to Monsieur, the brother of Louis XIV, by order of Mazarin.

"I was dressed up as a girl," says Choisy, "every time that the Duke of Orleans came to our house, and he came at least two or three times a week. I

had my ears pierced, diamonds, patches, and all the other little fopperies which are so easy to get accustomed to, and so difficult to get rid of. Monsieur, who liked all that,[1] paid me a hundred little attentions as soon as he arrived. He was accompanied by the nieces of Cardinal Mazarin and some of the Queen's daughters.

"He seated himself at the toilet-table, and they dressed his hair; he had on a bodice tight to the waist; this bodice was embroidered. They took off his coat and put on him a woman's mantle and petticoats. It was said that all this was done by order of the Cardinal, who wished to make him effeminate for fear that he should cause trouble to the King as Gaston did to Louis XIII. When he was dressed and decked out, we played at 'primo,' which was the fashionable game then, and at seven o'clock a collation was brought, but no servants appeared. I went to the door of the room, took the dishes, and placed them on small tables. I poured out the drink, and was rewarded with kisses on the forehead, with which these ladies honoured me. Madame de Brancas often brought her daughter, who has since become Princess d'Harcourt. She

[1] Monsieur has feminine tastes. He likes finery, and he takes care of his complexion. He is interested in needlework and ceremonies. He dances well, but he dances like a woman. Except in time of war, he could never be prevailed upon to mount a horse. The soldiers said of him that he was more afraid of the heat of the sun, or the black smoke of gunpowder, than he was of musket bullets. And that is quite true. . . . (*Memoirs of the Courts of Louis XIV and the Regency*, by Elizabeth Charlotte of Bavaria, Duchess of Orleans.

helped me to lay out the repast, but although she was extremely handsome, the Queen's daughters loved me best, no doubt because, in spite of the headdress and the petticoats, they felt that there was something masculine about me."

And up to the age of eighteen, Choisy had no other costume, but he was no longer dressed as a child but as a young girl. His waist was encircled with tight-fitting corsets which made his loins, hips and bust more prominent. Everything boyish about him was gradually repressed.

In 1662, Choisy, then eighteen years of age, went up for examination at the Sorbonne, according to his mother's wishes.[1] Thanks to the recommendation of the Archbishop of Paris,[2] he was received as an abbé without opposition. Through the solicitations of his mother, he obtained the abbacy of St. Seine[3] in January, 1663.

According to M. Desnoiresterres, it was at about this period of his life that he appeared as an actress at the Bordeaux Theatre.

"What fancy or what necessity took him there?

[1] Although he led a rather dissipated life, he thought himself obliged, in conformity with the wishes of the family, to adopt the ecclesiastical vocation, for which he had no special aptitude or desire, and which was contrary to his mode of life and thought.—D'Alembert. *Eloge de l'Abbé de Choisy.*

[2] Hardoin de Beaumont de Péréfixe (1605–1670), Archbishop of Paris. Opposed the Jansenists.

[3] St. Seine is now the chief town of a canton in the Côte-d'Or, eighteen miles from Dijon. The abbey was founded by St. Sequanus.

He surely must have told us in some part of his Memoirs that have not come down to us."[1]

"During five months I played in comedy at the theatre of a large city, dressed as a girl; everybody was deceived; I had lovers to whom I granted small favours, but was very discreet as to great favours, and had a reputation for prudence and virtue. I enjoyed the greatest pleasure that one can taste in this life."

[1] Gustave Desnoiresterres in *Revue Française*, 2nd year, Vol. 5, p. 395. 1856.

CHAPTER II

(1663–1672)

MADAME DE SANCY

HAVING returned to Paris, Choisy bought a house in the Faubourg St. Marceau—probably in 1663–1664—where he could show himself off at his leisure.[1]

"I began by having my ears repierced for the holes had become stopped up. I put on embroidered bodices, and a black and gold dressing-gown with trimmings of white satin, a belt with a busk and a large bow of ribbon at the back to mark the waist, a long train, a well-powdered peruke, ear-rings, patches, a little cap with a topknot of ribbon. At first, I wore only a dressing-gown of black cloth, buttoned down the front with black buttonholes down to the ground, and a train half an ell in length, which was carried by a lackey, a small peruke, slightly powdered, very simple ear-rings, and two large velvet patches on the temples. I called upon the Curé of St. Médard, who greatly praised my dress and said it was much more graceful than that of other young abbés, whose long coats and little

[1] It is very difficult to determine the precise date of events during the feminine existence of the Abbé.

cloaks did not inspire respect ; it is almost the same dress as that of several curés in Paris. Then I went to see the churchwardens, who had given me a seat right opposite the pulpit, and afterwards I paid visits in the quarter—Marquise d'Usson, Marquise de Ménières, etc.—and when I saw that I had succeeded in my purpose, I undid five or six of the lowest buttons of my dress and showed underneath a robe of spotted satin, the train of which was not so long as that of my dress. I had also underneath that a petticoat of white damask which was not seen except when the train was carried. I did not wear small clothes, they did not seem to me to be feminine, and I was not afraid of being cold as it was summer time. I had a muslin cravat, the tassels of which fell over a large bow of black ribbon, which was fastened to the top of my bodice, but did not prevent my showing a portion of my shoulders, which had kept very white owing to the great care I had taken of them all my life. Every night I washed my neck and part of my bosom with veal broth and rubbed in a pomade of sheeps'-foot oil, which made the skin soft and white."[1]

Delighted to play the "mistress of the house," the Abbé invited some lady neighbours and the Curé of the parish, who thought his colleague looked admirable in woman's attire.

[1] "I had no beard, as care had been taken ever since I was five or six years old to rub my cheeks every day with a certain liquid that kills the roots of the hair, provided it is done in childhood ; my black hair set off my complexion, which was passable, though it was never very white."

"I had invited Madame Dupuis and her two daughters, Monsieur Renard, his wife, his granddaughter, who is called Mademoiselle Charlotte, and his grandson, Monsieur de la Neuville. It was six o'clock in the evening; we were in my library, which was dimly lighted by a glass chandelier; plenty of mirrors, marble tables, pictures, china; the room was magnificent.

"I was very well got up on that occasion. I had on a dress of white damask, lined with black taffeta, a train half an ell in length, a bodice of black moiré, trimmed with silver and surmounted by a large bow of black ribbon, over which hung a muslin cravat with tassels, a skirt of black velvet, the train of which was not so long as that of the robe, and underneath that two white petticoats which did not show. I wore these to keep out the cold, for since I took to petticoats, I had left off wearing small clothes. I thought myself really and truly a woman. I wore ear-rings set with diamonds, a well-powdered peruke, and twelve or fifteen patches. The Curé came to pay me a visit: everybody was glad to see him, for he is much beloved in the parish.

"'Ah, Madame,' he said as he came in, 'you are splendidly dressed! Are you going to a ball?'

"'No, Monsieur,' I replied. 'I am giving a supper to my fair neighbours, and I am very glad to please them.'

"We sat down and talked over the news of the day—the Curé is very fond of doing that. There is always on my table the *Gazette*, the *Trevoux*, and the

Mercure galant, and each took that which he liked best. I made him read an article that was in the *Mercure* last month, about a person of quality 'who wanted to be a woman because he was handsome, who took delight in being called "Madame," who wore fine dresses of gold cloth, petticoats, ear-rings and patches.'

"'It is evident,' I said, 'that is meant for me, but I don't know if I ought to be angry about it.'

"'Why should you be angry, Madame?' said Mademoiselle Dupuis. 'Is it not true? And besides, the writer does not speak ill of you. On the contrary, he says that you are handsome. For my part, I wish that he had frankly and openly given your name in order that everybody might speak well of you, and I have a good mind to go to him and tell him my opinion.'

"'Do nothing of the sort,' I said; 'I like you and a few friends to see me look pretty, but I go into society as little as possible when I am dressed in this way. The world is so ill-natured, and it is so rare to find a man who wishes to be a woman, that I should hear unpleasant remarks made about me.'

"'What, Madame,' interrupted the Curé, 'have you ever met anybody who disapproved of your conduct in that respect?'

"'Yes, Monsieur, I have. I had an uncle, a State Councillor, named Monsieur ——,[1] who, know-

[1] Named Monsieur de Belesbat (Henry Harault de L'hospital, *sieur* de Belesbat, Councillor to the Parliament in 1638, *maître des Requêtes*, died in 1684.

"Belesbat's name," says Tullemant des Reaux, "is Harault,

ing that I dressed up as a woman, called on me one morning to scold me. I was making my toilet, and had just put on a chemise. I rose. 'No,' he said, 'sit down and go on dressing,' and he took a seat in

and he is of good family. The family has three branches, that of Vilraye, that of the Chancellor de Chivirny, whose grand-daughter is Mme. de Montglas, and that of the father of M. de Belesbat. He lived an amphibian sort of life between the City and the Court, as was said in a couplet about him.

> 'I like Belesbat, though he
> Is a fop, we must agree;
> His beard is like a fan, and his speeches are not short
> He's a "gallant city-man"—not a "gallant of the Court."'

And he played the gallant furiously, although he was married. When he was forty years of age, he was laughingly called 'the handsome dark man,' for he has the honour to be as brown as anyone can be. About eleven years ago, he paid court to the sister of du Gué-Bagnolles, the wife of a *maître des comptes* named Moussy. But, during the absence of Belesbat—who for some inopportune remark about the loss of Armentiers, had been ordered to make a journey to Vannes in Brittany—the lady received the attentions of other gallants, and the memory of the 'handsome dark man' became somewhat effaced. On his return, he tried to maintain his authority over her, forbade her to go to the Court, to talk to such and such men, and would not even give her permission to see her dearest friend, Mme. de Courcelles-Marguenat, also the wife of a *maître des comptes*. Not content with that, he picked a quarrel with Mme. de Courcelles, and in the presence of some other persons, he reproached her with having caused Mme. de Moussy to have a bad opinion of him. He told her she had taken another lover herself, and wanted her friend to imitate her, and not to be content with one at a time. 'For,' he added, 'it is well known, Madame, that such and such men are your lovers'; and he named them. Whilst the lady was complaining bitterly of his insolence, Branca, one of the gallants Belesbat had named, came in, and she told him how she had been insulted. Branca told Belesbat what he thought of him in very forcible language, and threatened to put him out of the house if he persisted in making such accusations, and as he *did* persist, Branca took him by the shoulders, pushed him out of the room, and locked the door.

"Belesbat did a worse action than that, for he told Prince

front of me. 'Since you order me to, my dear uncle,' I said, 'I must obey you. It is eleven o'clock and I must go to Mass.' I was soon dressed in a bodice laced at the back, and a skirt of black velvet,

d'Harcourt, whom he suspected of paying attention to Mme. Moussy, not to see that lady. 'She has been pledged to me for a long time past,' he said, in the presence of Laigné, 'and if she consents to see you I will play her a bad turn.' Indeed, he did so, for he wrote a letter to Moussy telling him to go to the church of St. Gervais (it was the parish church) where he would meet a person who had something of great importance to communicate to him. It is said that he received this letter in the presence of his wife, who also went to St. Gervais without telling anybody, for she suspected something, and she saw Mme. de Belesbat give some letters to Moussy. Madame de Belesbat was glad of the chance to revenge herself, and she said to Moussy, 'Monsieur, these are letters from your wife to M. de Belesbat. You will find in them the name of Pierre, and that's you.' Moussy is generally considered to be a rather weak-minded sort of man, and terribly jealous, for it is said that he often scolded and badgered that poor Christian woman most terribly, even in the presence of company, nevertheless, when he took the letters, he told Mme. de Belesbat they were not in his wife's handwriting, but were forgeries. Some one improved the story by adding that he also said, 'Madame, if you were only a little bit pretty, I could revenge myself on your husband, but upon my soul I should punish myself more than him.'

"Mme. Moussy said in her defence that Belesbat had taken from one of her lackeys a letter she had written to a lady friend, and had counterfeited her writing, and composed all the letters himself, and a good many people believed that was true and that Belesbat was the sort of man to make empty boasts and invent stories that had no foundation in fact. Nevertheless, the lady had afterwards a love affair with Fieubet, *maître des Requêtes*, and that did not tend to contradict Belesbat's story. Anyhow, her husband took it for gospel truth, or pretended to, and he complained to the Abbé de Belesbat about the injury his brother—whom he had always believed to be a man of honour—had done him, and said that if Belesbat did not retract his words, he would kill him on sight, and he was believed to be blockhead enough to carry out his threat. He certainly did scare his wife's lover by firing a score of pistol bullets through his windows, but even the marital fury of a *maître des comptes* endureth not for ever. In a little while, he was on the usual terms with his

a petticoat of the same over an ordinary petticoat, a muslin cravat with black and gold tassels. Up to then I had kept on my night-cap, but I now put on a well-curled and well-powdered peruke. The worthy man said nothing. 'I shall soon have finished, dear uncle,' I said; 'I have only to put on my ear-rings and half a dozen patches,' which I proceeded to do. 'From what I see,' he said, 'I ought to call you my niece; and in truth, you look very pretty.' I jumped up, threw my arms round his neck, and kissed him two or three times. He had no further remonstrances to make, but took me in his carriage, first to Mass, and afterwards to dinner at his house."

This anecdote that the Abbé related to his visitors shows the curious malformation of his mind. He *must* act the woman; he talks about his toilet over and over again with a superabundance of details. But that was not all, for when his guests were leaving, he allowed the women to kiss him. Each one came in her turn, and because the Curé, out of bashfulness, hung back, the Abbé rose, and kissed him "with all his heart."

Ecclesiastical manners were free and easy in those days, and the clergy looked benevolently upon the

wife, and they were seen walking together. Belesbat, finding himself generally blamed by everybody, said his wife had found and taken the letters in a fit of jealousy. Roquelane said of him, 'This town-gallant tries to imitate me, but he is a coward; he recants everything, but I never disavow anything.' In fact, 'the handsome dark man' got such a bad reputation that when his name was proposed for membership of some society to which he wanted to belong, he was black-balled."

disguised Abbé. He carried a candle in the processions, whilst a footman held up his train. On the day of the Holy Sacrament, Monsieur de Neuville took his hand, and served as his "squire." He was even asked to make the collection for the poor. He had a magnificent dress made specially for the occasion, and came to the church decked out like one of the shrines.

"I do not want to boast, but they never received so much money at St. Médard's. I made the collection in the morning at High Mass, in the afternoon at Vespers, and at the Benediction. I had Monsieur de Neuville as my squire, and was followed by a lady's maid and three footmen, one of whom held my train. Some folks reproached me with being a bit too much of the coquette, and said that whilst the beadle was making room for me to pass between the chairs, I was looking at myself in a pocket-mirror and rearranging my head-dress, but I did that only in the evening at the Benediction, and very few people perceived it. I felt very fatigued all day, but I had so much pleasure in finding myself admired by everybody that I did not feel weary when I went to bed.

"I forgot to say that I took two hundred and seventy-two livres. There were three good-looking young men, whom I did not know, who each gave me a louis. I believe they were strangers, for it is certain that many people came from other parishes, knowing that I was going to make the collection,

and I own that in the evening at the Benediction, that gave me great pleasure. It was dark, and people could talk more freely, and two or three times, in different parts of the church, I heard some one say, 'But is it really true that he is a man? He does quite right to pass himself off as a woman.' I turned towards them and pretended to ask money of some one near by, in order to give them the pleasure of seeing me. You may conceive that this made me feel more strongly than ever the desire to be looked upon as a woman. The praise was unsolicited, but was uttered as a truth by persons I had never seen, and who had no motive for wishing to please me."

Our coquette lived happily in her house, in the Faubourg St. Marceau. Numerous servants kept the house in good order, and a clever lady's-maid looked after the thousand and one details of the toilet. The lady of the house—Madame de Sancy as she now elects to call herself—goes out very little, being of quiet domesticated habits. She likes to lie in bed till noon, and then gets up just in time to be present at the "sluggards' Mass," to which she goes in undress, in "a dressing-gown, a petticoat, and a taffeta head-dress" to hide her night-cap, which she had not had time to take off.

But two young lady friends of the Abbé disturbed the repose of the pseudo "Madame de Sancy."

"Two young ladies, my neighbours, showed me great friendship and made no scruples about kissing me. I often invited them to supper, and they came

early and thought about nothing but adorning me. One arranged my head-dress, whilst the other put in my ear-rings, and each asked as a great favour to be allowed to put on my patches, which were never placed according to their taste. One day, they were bold enough to kiss me on the mouth in a manner so tender that it opened my eyes, and I saw that it meant more than friendship. I said in a low voice to the one who pleased me most—it was Mademoiselle Charlotte.

" ' Mademoiselle, have I the happiness to be beloved by you ? '

" ' Ah, Madame,' she replied, squeezing my hand, ' can anyone see you without loving you ? '

" And thereupon we covenanted to promise each other a secret and inviolable fidelity."

Mademoiselle Charlotte, on her part, simply confesses :

" I stood in no need of caution as I should have with a man. I saw nothing but a beautiful woman, and why should I be forbidden to love her ? What advantages a woman's dress gives you ! The heart of a man is there, and that makes a great impression upon us, and on the other hand, all the charms of the fair sex fascinate us, and prevent us from taking precautions."

This reply of Mademoiselle Charlotte affords us valuable psychological information. The seductive influence of the disguise is indisputable. The double

personality of the pretty boy in petticoats troubles the young girl's mind.

Added to this, there is a kind of feminine retaliation. The relative distance between the two sexes —which was much greater then than it is in our days, the man having much legal and moral authority —is considerably diminished. The *prestige* of masculine attire no longer exists. Mademoiselle Charlotte and our coquette are brought closer together, and the eagerness on the part of the one to readjust a ribbon or a bit of lace on the cap or bodice of the other is a clever method of tickling the self-love of the male by exaggerating his psychical and physical femininity. Nor does the Abbé refuse to play the part of a big, live doll, if the hands that adorn him are light and skilful. He is so desirous to be a woman that the infatuation shown by women to dress and decorate him transports him with delight.

On the other hand (as Choisy himself has written), he is so much occupied about himself that he does not desire Mademoiselle Charlotte to be anything more to him than an elegant, adroit and affectionately devoted "lady's-maid."

"I replied to her tenderness with all my own, but though I love her greatly, I love myself still more, and my ambition is to please mankind."

The idyll continues to be as happy as could be desired. Mademoiselle Charlotte writes:

"How kind you were last evening, Madame. I

enjoyed myself very much, and a hundred times I wanted to get up and kiss you in front of everybody. Well! it has been said that I love you, and that is true, isn't it? I don't wish to conceal it, and if you don't reveal it, I will. Grandpapa whispered to me, 'My child, I think that Madame de Sancy loves you: you will be very happy!' I could not help saying, 'Papa, we love each other with all our hearts, but Madame does not want it to be known.'"

Soon afterwards, there is a cry of distress.

"Really, Monsieur, I am in despair. I wish I had never known you, for you cause me great grief! I believe they have discovered some knowledge of our little friendship, and you alone are the cause. Why do you whisper in my ear? For some time past, I have been spied upon. I don't know whether anyone saw me go into your closet, but I have been reprimanded in a way I don't like. When you come, don't leave off talking to me, and take no notice, and they will think they are deceived. Heaven inspired me not to go to your house. I went to see Mademoiselle Dupuis, and they came to look for me; then I went to my aunt's, and they came there also; take care not to be too profuse in your attentions. Truly, Monsieur, I am very miserable through being in love with you. I have had all the trouble in the world to write you this letter; I am not in my room a moment but what they come to see what I am doing. Don't expect me to come to the pavilion. I don't know whether they suspect that you give

me letters? If you do give me a letter, make sure that you are not observed.

"I must confess that you are causing me great sorrow. For ten pins, I would go and pass three months in a convent. What do you say? Never ask me, 'Have you anything to give me?' When I have a letter, I will give it to you as soon as I can find the opportunity."

An evening party given by a relative of Choisy provided Mademoiselle Charlotte with an opportunity to dress up as a boy; and this naturally gave Madame de Sancy the idea to make her young friend reassume masculine attire in the privacy of the Faubourg St. Marceau.

"The next day, I bought the suit that I had hired for her, and which seemed to have been made specially for her, and I put it in a cupboard along with the peruke, the gloves, the cravat and the hat, and when my lady neighbours came to see me, by chance they opened the cupboard, found the costume, and threw themselves upon it—which was just what I wanted. Then they dressed up the little girl in it, and she once more became a handsome boy.

"After the visit was over, she wanted to take off the costume, but I would not allow her, and told her that I made her a present of it; that I should never wear it myself, and that all I asked in return was that she should put it on whenever my lady neighbours did me the honour to take supper with me.

"Charlotte's aunt—for she had neither father

nor mother—raised some objections, but finally gave in, all the other girls having declared that they would accept the same bargain whenever I liked. So I had the pleasure of often seeing her as a boy, and as I was a woman that made a real marriage."

Charlotte made such a pretty boy, and Choisy such a beautiful girl, that they decided to have their portraits painted by M. de Troyes.[1] When the portraits were finished, they were hung in the Abbé's *salon*, and some one happened to remark, "What a handsome couple! They ought to marry; they would love each other well." This gave Choisy the idea of having what he called "a marriage of conscience."

"I prepared everything for the *fête*, which was to be on the Thursday in mid Lent. I asked all Charlotte's family: she had two first cousins, who were curriers or tanners, with their wives and three of their children; and they all came to supper at my house. I had put on all my jewellery and had a new dress; and I had ordered a new suit for my little girl, whom I called Monsieur de Maulny, that being the name of a small estate of mine, worth two thousand livres a year, that I intended to give her.

"The ceremony was performed before supper, in order that we might have all the evening to enjoy ourselves. I had on a dress of silver moiré, with a little bouquet of orange flowers in my hair, just like

[1] François de Troyes, portrait painter, born at Toulouse in 1645, died at Paris, 1730.

a bride. I said out loud before all the relatives that I would take Monsieur de Maulny here present for my husband, and he said that he would take Madame de Sancy for his wife. We took each other's hands ; he put a little silver ring on my finger, and we kissed one another. I called the male and female curriers my cousins, and they thought I was doing them a great honour.

"We then had a good supper, after which we walked in the garden and had some singing and dancing. I gave some small presents to all the company—snuff-boxes, embroidered cravats and caps, gloves, neckerchiefs, etc. To the aunt I gave a ring worth fifty louis, and when everybody was in high spirits, my valet, who had the cue when to appear, came and said out loud that it was nearly midnight. Everybody declared that the bride and bridegroom must be put to bed ; the bed was all ready, and the room brilliantly lighted. I undressed, put on a night-cap with ribbons, and got into bed.

"Monsieur de Maulny had, at my request, had his hair cut short like a man's. After I was in bed, he appeared in a dressing-gown, with his night-cap in his hand, and his hair tied up with flame-coloured ribbon. He was rather bashful about getting into bed, but at last came and lay by my side. All her relatives came and kissed us ; our good aunt drew the bed curtains, and everybody went home. We then abandoned ourselves to delight, without however, passing the bounds of propriety, which may be hard to believe, but is nevertheless true.

"The day after our marriage or pretended marriage, I hung a notice-board on the door of my house that the second floor was to let. Her aunt hired the apartment, and came and lived there with Charlotte, who was always dressed as a man when in the house, because that gave me pleasure; the servants were ordered never to call her anything but Monsieur de Maulny."

The moral position was saved—or nearly so. Monsieur de Maulny was in ecstasies; Madame de Sancy in the seventh heaven. The psychical femininity of the Abbé did not prevent him from having normal sexual desires, and his pretended marriage satisfied both his folly and his reason.

Madame de Sancy conducts herself like a newly married wife madly in love with her husband:

"Sometimes I sent for linen-drapers and silk-mercers to come and show me their wares in order that they might see me in bed with my dear husband. We breakfasted in bed, and after a little dalliance together, Monsieur would put on his dressing-gown and retire to his own apartment, and I stayed with the tradespeople to select different stuffs. Some of the shopmen were sharp enough to flatter me, and praised the good looks and graces of Monsieur de Maulny as soon as he had left.

"'Am I not happy?' I said, 'to have a husband so good-looking and sweet tempered? For he never contradicts me, and I love him with all my heart.'

" 'Madame,' they would reply, 'you deserve no less. A pretty woman should have a handsome man.' "

Madame de Sancy sometimes went out with her husband, but she attracted too much attention, and as she was still in the middle of the honeymoon, she preferred the privacy of the apartment to the noise and bustle of the street.

The Cardinal of Paris heard of the strange life of the young ecclesiastic, and sent to make enquiries about it. Choisy writes :

" His Eminence, who liked everything in his diocese to be right and decent, sent an Abbé, who was one of my friends, and in whom he had confidence, to see what was going on. He was very friendly with me, and assured me that he would tell his Eminence that my costume was quite fit and proper, and not at all magnificent ; that my costume was black, with little gold flowers that hardly showed, and lined with black satin ; that I wore diamond ear-rings and three or four patches ; that he found me just on the point of going to Mass ; in short, all that had been reported about me was utter slander."

The honeymoon having waned, the husband and wife began to weary of each other. They went into society a good bit, " to the theatre, opera, balls, excursions, public gatherings, and to the Tuileries."

" The wife is well-shaped, but the husband is the better looking," said some one, as they passed by, and the Abbé smiled contentedly.

Society smiled too, at first, but after a time the smiles turned to sneers, and the conduct of Madame de Sancy and Monsieur de Maulny was looked upon as scandalous. M. de Caumartin, a nephew of Choisy, came to the Faubourg St. Marceau to represent to our coquette that she was "making a gazing-stock of herself."

The Abbé also received anonymous letters such as the following :

"I have not the honour, Madame, to be known of you, but I often see you at church and in private houses. I know all the acts of charity you perform in the parish. I own that you are pretty, and I am not astonished that you like to attire yourself as a woman, which suits you extremely well, but I cannot excuse the alliance which I dare to call scandalous, that you have made in the face of the sun and our Curé, with a young girl who is your neighbour, and whom you dress up as a man that you may take your pleasure with her. Nor do you attempt to conceal your failings ; on the contrary, you exult in them. You show yourself in your carriage in public places, with your pretended husband, and I fully expect that one of these days you will simulate pregnancy. Reflect seriously, my dear lady, and return to your senses. I should like to believe that you act in innocence, but people judge by appearances, and when they see your little husband lives in your house, and there is only one bed in your bedchamber, where your friends can

see you every day lying together like man and wife, it is natural to believe that you refuse nothing to each other. There is nothing amiss in your being dressed as a woman—that hurts nobody. Be a coquette if you like, but do not sleep with a young woman to whom you are not married—that shocks all the laws of decorum, and though there may not be any offence to God, there is always an offence to man. In conclusion, my dear lady, do not attribute my remonstrance to any ill-feeling, it is made out of pure friendship for you, for no one can see you without loving you."

Songs—of very indifferent quality—were also made about him :

In the Faubourg Saint Marceau,
Sancy wears a woman's gown,
Petticoat and furbelow,
With which he has amazed the town.
Gallant, kind and *debonair*,
He'll have many a love-affair.

At the church of Saint Médard,
He astounds the congregation
With earrings, patches—things that are
Signs of a woman's fascination.
Honest folks say, whilst they stare,
" He'll have many a love-affair."

and so on through a dozen verses of ill-rhymed, pointless lines, which the reader may be spared.

As might have been expected in a couple so constituted, they soon began to tire of each other. Madame de Sancy's " lord and master " had to put

up with a thousand little worries, and "the bride" inflicted as many on herself. Finally, she decided to break off this "marriage of conscience."

"A very rich bourgeois, who knew that Monsieur de Maulny was a girl, and that I had never attacked her honour, because I was too much engrossed with my own beauty, fell in love with her, and asked her hand in marriage. He was a wood-turner, and had more than a hundred thousand francs put away, all of which he offered to settle on her. The Curé came to speak to me about it; the aunt wept, and implored me not to prevent her niece's good luck; and Charlotte resumed her female garb, seemed in good spirits, and was evidently pleased at the prospect of marriage. I gave my consent to the marriage; I sent back all her letters, and gave her many presents. But as soon as the wedding was over, I never saw her again. I never could bear married women."

Just at this moment, a young and very pretty girl, named Dany, appeared to relieve the solitude of our "grass widow." Mademoiselle Dany, who had hitherto been known as "Babet," was apprenticed to a laundress, and she seems to have come to the Faubourg St. Marceau as a lady's-maid. She was cockered and spoiled, and the Abbé now sick of being a wife, played the part of an elder sister.

"My friendship for her increased rapidly. I had made for her some magnificent dresses and the finest linen in Paris. I bought for her of M. Lambert, the jeweller, a pair of diamond ear-rings which cost me

eight hundred and fifty livres. Her head-dress was adorned with silver and blue ribbons, and I made her put on seven or eight patches. She looked far too grand to be my maid, so I engaged another, who was more occupied with dressing her predecessor than in dressing me. I asked Babet's real name, and I gave orders that in future she was not to be called Babet any longer, but Mademoiselle Dany.

"Her joy was unbounded at finding herself so well treated, and she showed her gratitude every minute. I took her to my pew at St. Médard's and made her sit next to me that all might see what a regard I had for her—a regard that went so far that I liked to see her better dressed than myself. Indeed, without her I should have neglected my own dress, but she always took care that I should wear something which embellished my beauty."

The "little sister" was not devoid of sense and good feeling.

"'It is said that you are pretty. Do you think so yourself?'

"'My looking-glass tells me something of the sort, but what makes me believe it is that a beautiful woman has given me her heart.'

"'Would you be deeply vexed,' I added, 'if you had the small-pox?'

"'I should be in despair, Madame, for you would no longer love me.'

"'And if I had it, darling, would you cease to love me?'

" 'It is not the same thing,' she replied, 'you have so much good sense and kindness, my dear lady, that if you became as ugly as Margaret (the name of my cook) I should love you always.' "

Once more the world thought the Abbé's conduct too extravagant :

" We were living happily when a little storm arose, coming from the Cardinal's quarter. The superior of the seminary for old priests, which had just been established in the Faubourg St. Marceau, went and told the Cardinal that I was at church every day, but so dressed up and adorned with so many ribbons and diamonds, and looking so beautiful that he was afraid to take his seminarists to church.

" Mademoiselle Dany was really the cause of this complaint. The worthy superior could not see well, and he had taken her for me ; and seeing such a dress all glittering with gold and silver, he conscientiously thought it his duty to inform the Cardinal.

" The Curé was sent for and questioned, and replied that there was nothing unusual in my dress ; that I appeared at church every day very modestly attired, and that no doubt Mademoiselle Dany had been mistaken for me. He advised me, however, to go and see the Cardinal, and to wear ordinary dress, and to take Mademoiselle Dany in all her get-up.

" I duly went one audience day ; I had on my black dress over a black petticoat, and did not show

my bodice of silver moiré ; also a muslin cravat, a peruke slightly powdered, small gold ear-rings, and velvet patches on the temples.

" Mademoiselle Dany, on the other hand, was bravely attired ; she had on a robe of gold brocade, embroidered with natural flowers, her hair well dressed, my large diamond ear-rings, and seven or eight patches. We remained in the ante-chamber until the Cardinal appeared, showing out the Duchesse d'Estrées. He saw me, and advanced towards me.

" ' Monseigneur,' I said, ' I have come to disculpate myself. Have the goodness to look at my costume. I wear no other when I go to St. Médard's. If you do not approve of it, I will change whatever your Eminence pleases.'

" ' You look very nice,' he said, after having well examined me, and I can see that you have been mistaken for this fair damsel here.'

" He asked me who she was, and I told him her history. He praised me for my charitable conduct, and told me to look after her welfare.

" ' Mademoiselle,' he graciously said, ' be as virtuous as you are pretty.'

" Then he went away to give audience to other people, and we left, and were much looked at by about two hundred monks who were in the ante-chambers. The Curé of St. Médard's was waiting for us, and I related to him what the Cardinal had said. He told me next day that the Cardinal had said that I was very modestly dressed, and he was

quite satisfied; but that he had forgotten to thank me for all the charitable work I had done in the parish."

Moreover, Choisy found another way of completely conciliating the good opinion of the Cardinal.

"You may judge that gave me great pleasure. I went to another audience three months later, at the request of the Curé, to propose the foundation of a home for twenty orphans of the parish. I offered to give the lease of the house and 500 livres a year; the wives of several tanners, who were rich, also offered considerable sums. He listened to me, and offered to come and examine the house.

"I had come alone, and very much in the same get-up as little Dany. The holy Cardinal was perhaps vexed, and said that I had become a coquette, but he pardoned that on account of the good work I was doing. He had perhaps perceived that I was wearing the bodice of moiré and silver (which he did not notice on the first occasion), and that I had on my best ear-rings and seven or eight patches. I blushed as red as fire.

"'At all events,' he whispered to me, 'if you are a coquette, you are modest. The one excuses the other.'

"I made a profound bow and went away. He came to St. Médard's a fortnight later. The Curé informed me of his arrival, and I helped him to descend from his coach.

"He wished to go on foot to see the house I intended to take for the orphans, and he found it convenient. We walked along two streets, and he, seeing that my skirt and petticoats trailed on the ground, wanted one of my lackeys to hold up my train, which out of respect for him, I was unwilling to permit. I had not fallen into the same error as I did on the occasion of my last visit, and wore neither patches nor ear-rings.

"'Monseigneur,' I said, 'I expected your visit.'

"He laughed, and loudly praised my costume."

But "the whirligig of Time brings in his revenges," and this pleasant life was but of short duration.

One day, Monsieur Mansard, the superintendent of buildings, came to inform the Abbé that several persons had begged the King to give them the apartment in the Luxembourg which Choisy still possessed. Without any hesitation, Choisy decided to appear at Court forthwith, though it cost him a severe pang to abandon his fine dresses, and leave his quiet house. Mademoiselle Dany he confided to the care of a community of nuns, where she behaved so well that she was permitted to take the veil.

The change from petticoats to breeches was the ruin of Choisy. Madame de Sancy was a coquette, but the Abbé was a gambler, and the cards cost him much more than his womanish gewgaws.

"I played and lost immense sums. I lost all my money and finally my ear-rings and jewellery, as I

had no means of making myself look smart. The rage for gambling seized me. I sold my house in the Faubourg St. Marceau, lost the money I received for it, and thought no more about dressing-up as a woman."

CHAPTER III

(1663–1672)

COMTESSE DES BARRES

IN 1666, by the death of his mother, Choisy was enabled to resume the habits of what he fitly called "his early childhood." He received seventy thousand francs, and with this he bought back the jewels, furniture and plate, that had belonged to his mother.

"I was delighted to have such fine jewellery. I had never had a pair of ear-rings that cost more than two hundred pistoles, and a few rings, but now I became possessed of ear-rings worth two thousand francs, and three very fine rings. I had enough to enable me to adorn myself splendidly."

It should be added that Choisy had also inherited an income of ten thousand francs a year, and had fourteen thousand francs a year "benefice" from the Abbey of St. Seine.

He was wise enough not to risk his money at cards, but returned to his early passion, for, as he says, "Happy should I have been if I had always played the part of a woman, even if I had been ugly. Ridicule is preferable to poverty." And so faithful

to his usual proceedings, he gradually changes his masculine attire for that of a woman.

"I had no one to answer to for my conduct, and so could follow my own inclinations. It happened that Madame de la Fayette, whom I very often met, and who always saw me well dressed, and with earrings and patches, told me in a friendly way, that that was not a proper dress for a man, and that I should do better to attire myself as a woman.

"Actuated by the advice of so great an authority, I had my hair cut to enable me to wear a peruke. My hair was long and luxuriant, for one needed it in those days when false hair was not the fashion; it was worn in little curls on the forehead and large ringlets on each side of the face and all round the head, with a large pad of hair tied up with ribbons, or pearls if one had them."

Dressed up in his best finery, the Abbé pays a visit to Madame de la Fayette.

"'Oh, what a pretty woman!' she cried. 'You have followed my advice then, and you have done quite right. Ask the opinion of Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld' (who was in the room at the time).

"Women" (adds Choisy) "like to have their advice followed, and Madame de la Fayette felt herself pledged to make the fashionable world approve of the counsel which she had given—perhaps thoughtlessly. That gave me courage, and for two months I continued to dress myself up as a woman every

day. I paid visits, went to church, or to the opera or theatre, and got quite accustomed to the disguise. I made the servants call me Madame de Sancy."

In fact, the Abbé thought he looked so fascinating in woman's garb that he had his portrait painted by Ferdinand, a famous Italian artist of that day.

"Monsieur," the brother of Louis XIV, who had known the Abbé from a child, warmly welcomed his old friend whenever they met.

"He (Monsieur) was extremely friendly with me because we both had the same taste. He had often wished that he could dress up as a woman, but did not dare to do so on account of his high position (princes are imprisoned in their own greatness), but in the evening he puts on a head-dress, ear-rings and patches, and admires himself in a looking-glass."

A grand ball was given during Carnaval, at the Palais Royal, and Monsieur requested Choisy to be present "in a low-necked dress and with face uncovered," and charged the Chevalier de Pradine to dance the coranto[1] with him.

"The assembly was splendid, there were thirty-four ladies covered with pearls and diamonds. I was considered to look rather nice. I danced with the greatest perfection, and the ball was given specially for me. Monsieur opened the ball with Mademoiselle de Brancas, who was very pretty (she

[1] An Italian dance introduced into France towards the middle of the sixteenth century.

has since become Princess d'Harcourt), and a few minutes later, he left the ball-room and returned dressed as a woman, and masked. Everybody knew him, in fact he made no mystery of his identity. The Chevalier de Lorraine led him out to dance, and they danced a minuet together; then he went and sat down amongst the other ladies. He pretended to be rather bashful about removing his mask, but in reality he wanted to be seen. He carried his coquetry to such a point that he was everlastingly gazing at himself in a mirror, or putting on fresh patches or changing the place of the old ones. Perhaps I was even worse, for men when they think themselves beautiful are more infatuated with their own beauty than women are."

"It was a delightful life," says Choisy. Unfortunately, a severe moralist—Monsieur de Montansier[1]—put an end to the Paris successes of Madame de Sancy.

One evening when enthroned in his box at the Opera, opposite the private box of the Dauphin, the Abbé was looking "prettier than ever," a disagreeable adventure happened to him.

"The Opera had already begun some half-hour when Madame d'Usez caught sight of me, for my ear-rings glittered enough to be seen all over the theatre. Madame liked me very much, and being

[1] Charles de St. Maur, Marquis and afterwards Duc de Montansier (1610–1690). A shallow sort of man, but honest and outspoken. After a distinguished military career, he was appointed preceptor to the Dauphin in 1668.

desirous to have me near her, she sent La——, who was one of the suite of the Dauphin, to tell me to come to her. I went at once, and the little Prince, who was then about twelve years old, was very friendly, and paid me all sorts of compliments.

"I had on a white dress with gold flowers and facings of black satin, rose-coloured ribbons, diamonds and patches. They all thought I looked very nice. Monseigneur wished me to stay in his box, and I took part in the collation that was served. I was in the seventh heaven of delight.

"But my joy was soon to receive a severe check. Monsieur de Montansier paid a visit to the box, and Madame d'Usez told him my name, and asked him if he did not admire me. He looked at me for a long time, and then said:

"'I own, Madame, or Mademoiselle—I do not know which to call you—that you are very pretty; but are you not really ashamed to wear such a dress, and to pass yourself off as a woman when you are not one? Go, go, and hide yourself. Monsieur the Dauphin cannot admire you in a dress like that!'

"'Excuse me, Monsieur,' said the little Prince, 'but I think her as beautiful as an angel.'"

In spite of the Dauphin's reply, our Abbé retired very much mortified and resolved never to put on feminine attire again. But this serious resolution did not last, and Madame de Sancy resolved to go and live for three or four years in the country, where she could play the woman to her heart's

content. She consulted the map, and chose Bourges as her future residence.

"I wanted to go myself and reconnoitre the place. I went in the Bourges coach, with a valet of mine, named Bouju, who had been with me ever since I was a child. I had on a fair wig over my black hair, so that when I should return there no one would recognize me."

Having arrived at his destination, the Abbé fixed on the pretty château of Crespon, at some distance from Bourges, and the property of M. Gaillot, treasurer of France, as a suitable residence. On returning to Paris, the ex-Madame de Sancy sent M. Acarel, her business man, to Bourges, who bought Crespon for "a young widow, Madame la Comtesse des Barres."

Very soon the preparations for departure begin.

"Bouju had a wife who was very skilful in dressing my hair, but when I told her that I intended to continue to dress as a woman, she advised me to have my hair cut in the fashionable mode, and I did so—there was no other way of getting over the difficulty."

Madame la Comtesse des Barres must also have a well-furnished wardrobe.

"I had made for me two magnificent robes of gold and silver stuff, and four others much more simple, but very neat and tidy. I had also trim-

mings of all sorts; ribbons, head-dresses, gloves, muffs, fans, and all the rest, for I well guessed that I should find nothing of that sort in the country."

Well-trained domestics were needful for Madame des Barres, and she took the needful measures:

"I discharged all my valets, under pretext of the journey I was about to make, and paid them their wages. Then I took a furnished room near the Palace, and Bouju hired for me, for a month, a house in the Faubourg St. Honoré, where he put my carriage, four coach-horses and a saddle-horse. He also engaged a good man-cook, a groom, who would also serve as postilion, a lady's-maid to dress me and do the laundry-work, two footmen, and a page-boy to hold my train. My carriage was painted black with a monogram on the panels, with a fillet round to show that I was a widow."

When everything was ready, the Abbé went to the house in the Faubourg St. Honoré, and the new domestics "recognized Madame la Comtesse des Barres as their mistress." Two days later they started for Bourges, viz. the Abbé, Monsieur Acarel, Bouju and his wife, Angélique, the lady's-maid, the groom acting as postilion, and the man-cook mounted on the saddle-horse. On arriving at her destination, Madame la Comtesse des Barres stayed for a short while with Monsieur Gaillot whilst the château was being prepared. Five days later, she was installed at Crespon.

"I found the Curé—a good honest man and not at all bigoted; he loved order and mirth, and knew very well how to combine the duties of his profession with the pleasures of this life. I told him I should be an assiduous worshipper at the church; that I should try to procure good preachers for the Lent sermons; and that I should look after the poor of the parish. I begged him to consider me as one of his friends, and drop in and have supper with me at any time, without ceremony and take pot-luck."

The worthy Curé did not suspect that one of his confrères was concealed under the bodice and petticoats of Madame des Barres.

The Curé also brought some of the neighbouring gentry. One of these gentlemen—the Chevalier d'Hannecourt—had, or pretended to have, a passion for his fair neighbour; but says Madame des Barres:

"I had not much faith in his lovelorn looks, and believed that he only thought me pretty because I was rich; however, I treated him civilly and put up with his assiduities."

When the house was arranged to her taste, the Comtesse called upon her friends at Bourges.

"I took care to put on a befitting costume, but of a very simple character: ordinary lace, no diamonds, gold ear-rings, and a modest decorous head-dress that I did not take off during my visits, black ribbons, no patches."

Monsieur and Madame Gaillot were delighted to receive her ; they took her to the house of M. du Coudray, the lieutenant-general, who introduced her to his wife and daughter. The latter was about fifteen or sixteen years old, and was so simple, but so lively and good-humoured, that she at once won the Abbé's heart. The du Coudrays wanted their relatives to become acquainted with the fair proprietor of Crespon, and a grand dinner was planned.

" I went on the appointed day, but I thought it right to put on my best finery, for I had always previously appeared at Bourges in very modest attire.

" At half-past eleven, I got into my carriage along with Madame Bouju. When I arrived at the house of the lieutenant-general, Madame was just about to enter her carriage, and when she saw me, wanted to enter the house again, but I prevented her when I learned that she was going to Mass at the Cathedral. It was the ' sluggards' Mass,' and all the fine women and gallants of the town were there.

" I was gazed at to my heart's content : the novelty of my robe, my diamonds and other finery all attracted attention. After the Mass, we passed out between two rows of spectators to get to our carriage, and I heard several voices in the crowd say :

" ' There's a pretty woman ! '—which gave me great delight."

When they came back to the house, the lieutenant-general was waiting, and gallantly helped Madame des Barres to descend from her carriage.

The company assembled to do honour to the Countess comprised the best society of the city, and included the Marquise de la Grise and her daughter, a very pretty young girl, and M. de St. Siphorien, the abbot of a monastery near Bourges, and an amiable and accomplished man, whose first remark to his confrère in petticoats was :

" ' Madame, I have heard a great deal about you, but my eyes behold much more than I heard.' "

Choisy, who played the part of a woman remarkably well, modestly thanked the abbot, and took her place amongst the other ladies, and joined in the usual " irresponsible chatter " common on such occasions, and in which the Countess was quite an adapt.

But Madame des Barres kept her eyes fixed on Mademoiselle de la Grise, and prepared her attack adroitly. She praised the girl's dress, but privately whispered to her mother that a young woman should not show quite so much of her neck and bust. Then she attacked the way of doing the hair, and arranged it herself to make her look better, and profited by the opportunity to remark :

" ' Madame, I have with me a woman who has brought me up, and who is very skilful. She dresses my hair, and I think I look rather nice.' "

Whereupon everybody cried out, "Why certainly! No one could look better! It is easy to see that Madame comes from Paris!"

"'It is not,' added the cunning Countess, 'that I do not know how to dress my own hair, but one is sometimes lazy. In any case, it is a great advantage to a young lady to be able to do without a maid.'"

And then, after a pause, as they say at the theatre:

"'If you like, Madame, to let your daughter stay with me for a week, I will answer for it that she will learn how to dress her hair to perfection. I will make her study that accomplishment three hours a day, and will not let her be out of my sight.'"

"'I shall have the honour,' replied Madame de la Grise, 'to call upon Madame la Comtesse and thank her for all the kindness she has shown my daughter.'"

The game was won, and the Abbé said no more. The company then sat down to dinner, and at the end of the repast Madame played some music, and then went home, "as she did not like to be out at night whilst wearing so much jewellery."

She had asked the guests to call upon her, and on the following day they all came, including Madame de la Grise, her daughter, and the old abbot of St. Siphorien.

The Countess had not finished her toilette when they arrived, and she seized the opportunity of proving to everybody that she was a woman by showing herself in short petticoats.

"I saw their carriage through the window. I was really in my *négligé* at the time—a dressing-gown of soft pink taffeta, a neckerchief, festoons of white ribbon, a lace cap with pink ribbons on my head, not a single patch, my small gold ear-rings. I went downstairs and received them with as much cordiality as if I had been fully dressed."

These lines have a curious psychological interest. It is always the case that when a man takes pleasure in disguising himself as a woman, he is anxious to show that not only his dress but his underlinen also is that of a woman.

Choisy could have begged the company to wait a few minutes; he did nothing of the kind, but putting on his sweetest smile and most unconcerned air, hurried to meet his guests.

"'Mesdames,' he said, 'now you have seen me in every guise.'"

The abbot of St. Siphorien promptly replied:

"'I do not know, Madame, which suits you best, but I know that forty years ago I should have preferred the shepherdess to the princess.'"

Whilst a repast is being prepared, the Countess shows her guests the house, gardens and park. Then, under pretence of trying over some music on the clavecin, she whispers to Mademoiselle de la Grise:

"'My dear child, you do not love me.'"

The only reply of the young girl was to throw her arms round the lady's neck.

" ' Tell me frankly, should you be glad to pass a week with me ? ' "

The girl began to cry and kissed her friend with so much tenderness that it was easy to see " her little heart was touched."

" ' But will your mother give her consent ? ' "

" ' My dear mother,' replied the girl, ' desires nothing better, but she did not dare to speak to you about it, as she was not sure that you really meant what you said."

" ' Well, my dear child, I will lead up the conversation to the subject of hair-dressing, and we shall see what she says.' "

The Comtesse des Barres was a clever man, as well as a skilful woman.

" We soon afterwards returned to the other guests, and under pretext of having some orders for the servants, I gave Madame Bouju the cue. A few minutes later she passed through the room where we were, as though she were going to my wardrobe. I called her and said :

" ' Madame, will you tell me what you think of the *coiffure* of Mademoiselle de la Grise ? '

" She turned towards her and said :

" ' Really, Madame, it is a pity that such a pretty young lady, who has such beautiful hair,

should wear it dressed in a manner so unsuitable to her face.'

"'Would you like me,' I said to Madame de la Grise, 'to send you Madame Bouju to-morrow to dress your daughter's hair? You will see what a difference there will be.'

"The old abbot interrupted her reply, and said to me:

"'Is it right, Madame, that you should deprive yourself of the services of your servants? Yesterday you offered to Madame de la Grise to keep her daughter for a week and teach her the art of hairdressing.'

"'If Madame la Comtesse,' said the wife of the lieutenant-general, 'made the same offer for my daughter, I should take her at her word.'

"'And I,' said her daughter, 'should be delighted.'

"'My dear girl,' I replied laughingly, 'I will have whoever loves me best.'

"'It is I! It is I!' they both cried at the same time, throwing their arms round my neck; and their little dispute much amused the company.

"It was agreed that Mademoiselle de la Grise should come first, and that the daughter of the lieutenant-general should follow in succession."

The apprenticeship commenced the following day; and it was also the beginning of an idyll in which the young woman and the young girl rivalled each other in grace and seduction. For Madame des

Barres it was a delightful existence. She lived in an absolutely feminine atmosphere with Mademoiselle de la Grise, Madame Bouju and the maid. There was nothing to remind her that she was a man. The morning was spent in long discussions about silks and stuffs, the appearance of a dress, or admiration of some newly purchased lace. Dressing was a slow process : so many sorts of linen, gauze, tulle, silk and taffeta had to be tried on. Choisy had so long been accustomed to the corset that it was no longer an instrument of torture to him, but a support that tenderly enclosed his body. The large and heavy skirt and petticoats might deprive him of the free motion of his limbs, but the restraint was not irksome. Under such circumstances, how could he do otherwise than believe himself a woman !

And then the continual contemplation in the glass ; the cream to improve the complexion ; the paint to touch up the lips and eyebrows ; the hundred and one stray ringlets to adjust.

There are also the meals taken *tête-à-tête* with a charming companion ; the afternoons when they " embroider in tapestry " or do some other kind of feminine work ; the walks in the park, the one leaning on the arm of the other. All these things combine to form for Choisy that complete femininity that he has so ardently desired and has at length obtained.

The relations between Mademoiselle de la Grise and the Abbé are innocent—or nearly so ; some little caresses, a few kisses, a head leaning on a

shoulder; a hand that smooths a pure forehead. That, above all others, is the sort of love affair our hero prefers.

But if Mademoiselle's hair was artistically dressed, it was due to the skill of Madame Bouju and the deft fingers of the Countess rather than to the girl's own efforts. That also was the opinion of the girl's mother, when she came to fetch her daughter back.

To allay any suspicions that might arise in the elder lady's mind, cunning Madame des Barres found fault with the girl's awkward carriage and slovenly way of dressing; and the mother fully convinced that the Countess had no other motive than to teach the girl society manners—agreed to leave her daughter there for another fortnight to complete her education.

A few days later, Madame du Coudray, the wife of the lieutenant-general, came with her daughter, and the latter pertinently remarked:

"'It really takes a long time for Mademoiselle de la Grise to learn how to dress her hair. It seems to me that I could have learned it all in four lessons. She was asked for a week, and she has been here more than a fortnight.'"

At the end of several weeks, Mademoiselle de la Grise, having acquired sufficient skill in hair-dressing, was taken back to Bourges, and Mademoiselle du Coudray occupied her place.

"I brought her back with me, and kept her only a week, for Bouju taught her so quickly that I was

astonished. She was a bright lively girl and anxious to learn ; so she dressed her hair in the morning, undid it again in the afternoon instead of going for a walk, and in the evening did it over again. So, at the end of a week, I took her back to Bourges as proud of herself as though she had won a great victory, and her mother equally proud of her."

Shortly afterwards, M. de la Barre, the Intendant of the province, honoured the Countess with a visit. She received him magnificently, the entertainment even including a scene from " Polyeucte," in which, of course, Mademoiselle de la Grise took the part of Sévère, and Madame des Barres that of Pauline.

Choisy's constant care was not to betray his real sex, and to keep up the character he had assumed. Just as though he had been a great lady, he followed the custom of that time, and invited his female friends to see him put to bed.

" Bouju and Angélique, my other maid, curled my hair and did it up in curl-papers, and put on my night-cap and night-gown—which was trimmed with Alençon lace. I took out my diamond ear-rings and put in small gold ones. As for my patches they fell off of themselves, and I slept between two sheets.

" ' All ladies are not like you,' Madame Gaillot said to me, ' and one must be as beautiful as you are to be able to do without assistance ; but for you your mirror suffices, and it tells you continually that you have every attraction in yourself.' "

. . . . . .

We have turned over some of the pages in which are recorded the "early childhood" of Choisy. Their number is considerable, and the trivial events chronicled have only a psychological value; but they have that at least, and it is in them that we note the Abbé's overwhelming desire to act and think as a woman would.

We select a few instances amongst others:

Madame de la Grise gave a grand soirée in honour of the Intendant-general, and our fair Countess was, of course, invited. The day arrived, and "after having heard High Mass," Madame des Barres left Crespon along with Mademoiselle de la Grise and Madame Bouju, and taking with them everything that was necessary for her adornment, to be put on just before the ball began.

"Our hair had been curled the previous evening, and was done up in curl-papers. We made a very light dinner, so anxious were we to begin to dress. I insisted that Bouju should begin with Mademoiselle de la Grise, as she was to be the queen of the ball. When she was fully dressed and her hair done, I took out of her ears the ruby ear-rings I had given her and replaced them by my fine diamond ones. Her mother cried out that she would not permit that, but I told her that I should be greatly grieved if she refused, and she finally consented. I also placed in her hair the diamond pins. I was delighted to see her so beautiful.

"'But you, Madame,' said Mademoiselle de la

Grise, 'have nothing left for yourself. It is true that you are so beautiful that you have no need of adornment.'

"I also put on 'my little wife's' face twelve or fifteen patches; one cannot put on too many, provided they are small.

"For my own part, I had on a very beautiful robe, my head well dressed, a pearl necklace and ruby ear-rings; they were false, but everybody thought them real. No one would have suspected the Countess, who had so much fine jewellery, of wearing imitation stones."

Twelve ladies had been invited to supper, and that meal offered the Countess an opportunity to indulge in small talk and chatter. After the repast:

". . . The company adjourned to the cabinet whilst the ball-room was being prepared. The candles were lighted, and the ball began at eleven o'clock with the coranto, followed by other dances. At midnight, Madame de la Grise was informed that there were some maskers below who requested admission. She was delighted, and there came in two bands of maskers all very nicely dressed. One of the masks in particular had on a splendid dress, and danced remarkably well. No one recognized him, and I was dying of envy to know who it was. I had danced with him several times, but he would not remove his mask. I took him into the cabinet, and when we were alone, I pressed him so much

that at last he took off his mask, and showed the face of the Chevalier d'Hannecourt.

"I own that I was much touched by his gallantry, and begged him to put on his mask again. He had come solely to see me, and was so well disguised that no one would ever have guessed his identity. He had spent a year's income on his costume. He left the ball without his absence being perceived, and returned home."

As soon as she was back at Crespon, the Countess received a visit from the Curé, acting on behalf of the Chevalier d'Hannecourt.

"He saw in me a young widow, handsome, well formed and very rich, and he wished to marry me. The Curé approached the subject in a round-about manner, but he met with a direct refusal.

"'Monsieur,' I said, 'I am happy; I am the mistress of my own actions, and I have no wish to become a slave. I acknowledge that the Chevalier is worthy to be loved, and I will find some opportunity to repay his kindness, but I will never marry him!'"

The Countess gave the Curé a purse of a hundred louis, begging him to place it on the Chevalier's table without saying whence it came, in order to repay the poor suitor for the expense his costume had cost him.

A theatrical company came to Bourges, and the Comtesse des Barres was much taken with a young actress, named Roselie. As just about this time

Mademoiselle de la Grise was married to a Monsieur des Gouttes, and as the Abbé "could never bear a married woman," Roselie took her vacant place at Crespon, and the usual comedy recommenced.

"I took to hunting, and dressed myself *en amazone*. I made Roselie put on a hat and wig, and she looked so captivating, that little by little, I made her dress herself as a boy entirely. She made a very pretty cavalier, and it seemed to me that I loved her still more. I called her my little husband, and everybody else called her the little Count, or Monsieur Comtin. She was my 'squire,' and I never tired of seeing her in a peruke. I had her hair cut a little shorter; she had a charming head and that rendered it still prettier; the peruke makes young people look older."

Unfortunately, the idyll came to an unexpected conclusion.

"The pastime was very innocent, and lasted seven or eight months; but then unhappily, Monsieur Comtin began to have belly-aches, loss of appetite, and 'morning sickness.' I suspected the cause of her illness, and made her reassume her female attire, as being more suitable to her present condition, and better adapted to hide it. I made her put on a long dressing-gown without any belt; we gave out that she was ill, and her headaches and belly-aches confirmed the statement."

At the end of five or six months, when there was no longer any means of hiding "the fruit of dis-

honour" from the eyes of the world, the Abbé, fearing a scandal, took his protégée to Paris.

"As soon as I arrived, I placed Roselie with a midwife, who took great care of her. I went to see her every day, and took her little presents to please her. I thought only of her, and no longer of myself and my desire for adornment. I wore a very simple and quiet costume without either ear-rings or patches.

"In a short while, Roselie gave birth to a little girl, whom I had well brought up, and at the age of sixteen, I married her to a gentleman who had five or six thousand livres a year: she is very happy. Six weeks after her birth, her mother had become more beautiful than ever, and then I began to think again about my own beauty. I dressed very handsomely, and I often went to the theatre with two ladies who were my neighbours. Roselie seemed to me a beautiful star."

Not long afterwards, Choisy married his protégée to an actor named du Rosan.

"As soon as my little girl was married, I had no one to think about but myself. The desire to look pretty came upon me stronger than ever. I had magnificent dresses made, I put on my fine ear-rings, which had been locked up for the last three months, and also the ribbons, patches, the coquettish looks and little airs—nothing was forgotten. I was but twenty-three years of age; I thought myself lovable, and I wished to be loved.

"I went to various places of entertainment and to public promenades; many young men recognized me, and followed me to find out where I lived. My relatives complained that I was making myself a public character. They had overlooked my previous conduct on account of my youth, but they now came to me and spoke so seriously that I resolved to leave all this foolery and make a journey to Italy. One passion drives out another, and when I was at Venice, I once more began to play heavily. I won at first, but I afterwards lost all I had won.

"The rage for gambling long possessed me, and has been a source of trouble to me through a great part of my life. Happy should I have been if I had continued to play the part of a pretty woman, even after I had become old and ugly. Ridicule is always preferable to poverty."

CHAPTER IV

(1672–1724)

A question of dates—Madame Bossuet—The passage of the Rhine—The Abbé becomes devout—Journey to Rome—Choisy touched by grace—Journey to Siam—The Abbé says his first Mass—Choisy displeases Louis XIV—Choisy's works—Elected to the Academy—*History of the Church*—His death—*The New Astræa.*

HISTORIANS are not agreed as to the exact time that Choisy's feminine career lasted. We are certain only as to the first twenty-two years of his life—from his birth in 1644 to the death of Madame de Choisy in 1666. In that year, the young Abbé set out on his travels, and so far as we can ascertain, again assumed female attire a few months later, and continued to wear the petticoats until 1672, and wore them occasionally between that year and 1676. But there is no means of ascertaining the exact time that Choisy continued to pass for a girl, either in his mother's house, or at Bordeaux as an actress, or in the Faubourg St. Marceau under the name of Madame de Sancy, or at Crespon under the name of Comtesse des Barres. A portion of the Memoirs of the Abbé was destroyed,[1] and in the portion that

[1] By the Marquis d'Argenson, to whom the MS. had been entrusted.

has come down to us there is a remarkable carelessness as to dates.

The date of the journey to which we have alluded as forming a break in the feminine existence of Choisy (1666) has been much disputed. On the one hand, it is declared that he went to Italy and remained there ten years; but we know for a fact that he was in France in 1669, and between 1671 and 1673. Did he reside in Italy in 1666? It is open to doubt. "For our part," writes M. Desnoiresterres,[1] "we cannot be perfectly certain that Choisy went to Italy before 1676, at the time of the election of the new Pope, and if we are compelled to acknowledge that he passed ten years in that country, it would be rather after than before that date." We are inclined to share his views.

On the other hand, it would seem that about 1672–1673, during that intermittent period when he was some days a man and some weeks a woman, he had a love affair with Madame Bossuet, the sister-in-law of the celebrated preacher. The lady was old, but flighty, and the Abbé was very handsome, but it does not appear that this tender passion lasted any length of time.

The war with Holland (1672) took Choisy away from his elderly lady-love. He was in the suite of Cardinal de Bouillon and was present at the passage of the Rhine. He writes:

"I was there" (at the passage of the Rhine) "and I

[1] *Revue Française*, 2nd year, Vol. 5, p. 513.

even had the pleasure of performing an act that was agreeable to the King—I made him hear Mass. He had set out the previous evening at eleven o'clock at night; his army was encamped about six leagues from there; he had marched all night, and had taken with him only the detachment required for his enterprise. I was, by chance, in the tent of my brother, de Balleroy, when he received the order to march along with his regiment. I followed him without hesitation, and without knowing whither we were going, but it was evident that if we started at eleven at night, it was not for a review. At three o'clock in the morning, we found ourselves on the banks of the Rhine, opposite Tolhuys. I was only three paces from His Majesty when he was told that the Prince had been wounded, and M. de Longueville killed. . . .

"The affair finished about ten o'clock in the morning. The King, who, it may be mentioned, had never missed hearing Mass but once in his life, asked that the service should be performed. There was no priest or chaplain present; Abbé de Dangeau and I were the only ecclesiastics of the Court on the spot. We went and found a regimental chaplain. We had not a missal, but found one in the portmanteau of Comte d'Agen. We set up an altar, and we had the honour of serving the King at Mass. So I can speak of that occasion as an eye-witness.

"But shall I pass so lightly over an event which touched me more deeply than anything else in all my life? I was the servant—what do I say,

servant ?—I was an intimate friend of M. de Longueville. I will not attempt to describe him—that would only renew my grief. I knew him—as everybody else did—to be a most accomplished, amiable and magnanimous prince, and I also partly knew his secret. We every moment expected news from Poland, and there is every probability that he would have been elected King. I was with him every day. Whilst we were besieging Orsau, I gave him a gold-mounted cane, which he greatly liked, for he had no affectation about receiving presents from his friends, and was sure to repay them by still greater ones. He had just returned from a foray to the banks of the Yssel ; he had been thirty hours in the saddle, and was much fatigued. But when he heard that the King had started that night with 6000 horse, his courage gave him renewed strength ; he set off at full gallop and arrived on the banks of the Rhine just as the Prince had entered a boat to cross the river. I was standing on the river-bank, and as he ran past me, he said, 'Adieu, Abbé. I have not your cane with me to-day.' He saw that the boat was already unmoored, and cried out that they were to wait for him, or he would swim out to it, and the Prince, who knew his nephew, being afraid that he would do as he said, and that his horse, being already fatigued, would sink and drown his rider, made the boat return and take in the young man. We know too well what followed. Emulation and a jealousy for glory between the Duke and M. de Longueville excited their temerity, and two hours

later I saw, yes, saw with my own eyes, the dead body of M. de Longueville brought back on a horse, the head on one side and the feet on the other of the horse's back. The soldiers had cut off the little finger of the left hand to get a diamond ring that he wore. No, I do not believe I had ever been so much touched as I was then. And, which is very singular, although I was still young, a great gambler, and not much attached to my ecclesiastical duties (I had not long been tonsured) I shut myself up in a hut of leaves that my brother, de Balleroy, had had constructed, went down on my knees, and with tears and with such heartfelt grief as I would have for my own sins, I prayed to God for M. de Longueville. I could not console myself, and was overcome at the thought of a young prince, ambitious, gallant, and subject to his own passions, meeting with such a sudden death, and hurried into Eternity unprepared, and this made me sick at heart. These sad thoughts afflicted me during the whole of the campaign, and I did not recover my spirits until I learned that M. de Longueville, before starting for the war, had made a general confession to the Carthusians, and so was prepared to meet death as a true Christian."

This sudden death made a great impression upon the Abbé, and gave him—temporarily—a call to religion. He shut himself up in the Abbey of St. Seine and tried intently to become a saint—also incidentally, to refill his purse, which had become deplorably empty.

So far as the purse was concerned, he succeeded without much difficulty, but unfortunately, as the money flowed in, the religion flowed out, and before long he had rejoined Bussy-Rabutin at Dijon and was once more tempting fortune by gambling.

For the next few years, we find him making a short retreat to St. Seine pretty frequently, to renew his stock of money and religion.

The death of Pope Clement X (22nd July, 1676) was a blessing for the Abbé, for it caused him to leave a life of debauchery and follow Cardinal de Bouillon to Rome.

The Cardinal, before starting, went to take leave of Louis XIV, and on quitting the King's cabinet and passing through the ante-chamber, he caught sight of Choisy, and asked him if he would come as his conclavist. The Abbé promptly accepted such a tempting offer.

"'I shall leave in two hours' time, but you can easily catch me up,' said M. de Bouillon. 'Go and get the King's permission, and your instructions from the Minister, and then take the diligence and rejoin me at Lyons; I shall be there for the next six days.'"

Louis XIV granted the required permission, and the Abbé at once set out for Lyons.

"'By the by,' said Cardinal de Bouillon, when he received him, 'do you know Italian?'"

Choisy was obliged to confess ignorance of that language.

"'But how will you manage? Very few of the Cardinals understand French.'

"'Oh, Monseigneur, that does not trouble me. It will take us a fortnight to get to Rome, and during all that time I swear I will speak nothing but Italian, whether I speak it well, or whether I speak it badly. By the time we get to Rome, I shall know the language.'

"'Well, do the best you can,'" said the Cardinal, with a laugh.

Choisy kept his word. "By sticking in '*vostra signoria*' pretty frequently, and mixing up Latin with French, I made up a sort of 'dog-Italian' that sufficed to make myself understood."

Cardinal de Bouillon was very reticent as to the chances of the different candidates for the Papal Throne, so finding that there was nothing to be learned from him, Choisy went to Cardinal de Retz, "who really had a bit of common sense in his head." De Retz asked the Abbé if he liked his position.

"'Not at all, Monseigneur. I know nothing. The very servants know much more than I do.'

"'I wish to take you for my conclavist,' said the Cardinal. 'Cardinal de Bouillon will be well pleased, and by this means you will know everything,

and will be general conclavist of the French cardinals.'"

The four cardinals, Retz, de Bouillon, d'Estrées and Bonzi, had all been friends of Madame de Choisy—much to the advantage of her son.

Choisy was introduced into the council-chamber to draw up the letters which its prelates sent to the King.

De Retz and de Bouillon were in favour of Cardinal Grimaldi, "who was eighty-four years of age, and was supported by the Chigi faction, and by all the ancient cardinals who wanted to see a return to the good old times." D'Estrées and Bonzi were inclined to vote for Odescalchi,[1] Louis XIV ordered the French cardinals to vote for the latter:

"He was elected the same day and proclaimed Pope on the morrow. Cardinal de Bouillon sent me at nine o'clock in the evening (a most unusual hour) to demand a secret interview with Odescalchi. He went, and was with him half an hour without making any proposals—Odescalchi was not the sort of man to receive any. When Cardinal de Bouillon had left, I threw myself at the feet of Odescalchi and said, 'O! baciato il primo gli piedi di vostra Santita.' (Oh, let me be the first to kiss the feet of Your Holiness.) He replied, 'Non e ancora.' (Not yet.) But it seemed to me that the news of his election affected him more than he pretended."

[1] Benedict Odescalchi, elected Pope 22nd September, 1676. He took the name of Innocent XI: he died in 1689.

We possess very little information regarding the life of Abbé de Choisy between the years 1676 to 1683. Did he remain in Italy, or did he return to France? *The Life of the Abbé de Choisy*, attributed to Abbé d'Olivet, does not furnish us with any precise knowledge, although Abbé d'Olivet was the intimate friend of Choisy. We are inclined to think it possible that he once more became "Madame de Something-or-other" somewhere or other.

. . . . . .

The death of Maria Theresa of Austria, the wife of Louis XIV, which happened in 1683, affected Choisy's mind most violently, for he was so given up to the pleasures and joys of this world that he could not bear any emotion. As a priest, he ought to have become familiar with sickness and death, but the curious education he had received from his mother did not predispose him to regard seriously the problems of life, though his duty as a good Catholic caused him much mental anguish when illness brought him face to face with what he believed to be imminent death.

"I had scarcely begun to reflect about the death of the Queen," writes the Abbé, "when I myself was attacked by a violent fever. At the end of three days, I had lost all my strength and all my spirits. Death, which I had hitherto thought so far off, seemed near at hand with all its fearful apparatus. I saw myself in a bed surrounded by priests and amidst lighted candles; my relatives looking sad,

the doctors hopeless, and every face announcing to me that I was on the verge of eternity. Oh, who can tell what I thought of in that terrible moment. For if my body was worn-out, and if I had scarcely any blood left in my veins, my mind was free and my head was clear. I saw then, or believed I saw, heaven and hell. I saw the terrible God seated upon a throne of light and surrounded by angels. It seemed to me that He asked an account of all the acts of my life, of the mercies He had shown me and I had abused ; and I had nothing to reply to Him ; nothing to offer to satisfy His justice. I saw also at the same time the yawning abyss ready to devour me ; the eternal fires destined for the punishment of my crimes. No, no one can imagine all that who has not passed through it. For in that condition, when the soul is ready to leave the body, do not imagine that we see things then as we see them at present. The most incomprehensible mysteries appear clear as day. The soul, being almost freed from the body, has a greater perspicuity. We see the justice of God about to punish us, and we no longer presume on His mercy. For my own part, I confess I was in great fear. I asked pardon of God from the depth of my heart. I could have prayed to have time to become penitent, but death pressed me too closely. I had heard the doctors say, 'In two hours he will have ceased to live.' What was to be done? What resolution could I take? I knew of nothing, I remembered nothing which could give me the least hope. I saw

no means of redeeming my sins by alms-giving; all the gates of heaven appeared to be closed against me. I had received the Sacrament, and was prepared as well as I could be for the terrible voyage. But of what use is a hurried preparation? And what can a heart intent on worldly affairs, fed with all the pleasures of the age, and but little used to reflect about a future life, cogitate upon in its last moments when confronted with an almost inevitable death? I should have been in utter despair if I had remained longer in a condition fit to terrify the most determined mind. My body, worn-out by the violence of my disease, and harassed by the agitation of my mind, demanded rest. I fell asleep, and woke up feeling easier. I thought that, during my sleep, I saw myself at the door of a gallery that shone with light, but a soft light which without dazzling appeared to me to be more brilliant than any light I had ever seen. I felt a firm resolution to reform, if I should ever return to health, and I began to believe that it was not impossible that God would have mercy upon me. A thought so consoling gave me courage. The mind now at rest, helped to cure me quite as effectually as quinine, and I soon found myself in a condition to enjoy life, but I only desired life in order that I might become a penitent."

This time the Abbé was fully determined to send his gewgaws, petticoats and patches to the devil. As soon as he could stand, he took refuge in the Seminary of Foreign Missions. There, with his

friend, Abbé Dangeau, he composed a work which, under the form of a dialogue, treated of the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, providence and religion. The volume appeared in 1684, at Paris, illustrated with vignettes by Sebastien Leclerc, an artist and engraver of that day (1637–1714).

Choisy writes in the preface :

"The first two dialogues[1] which treat of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God were written some time before a serious illness that I had last year. The solid and manifest reasons that you will find here had already commenced to disturb my mind, but when I found myself at the point of death, they occurred to me in such a vivid manner that I was entirely convinced. The last dialogue, which is on religion, is the sequel of serious reflections that the fear of the judgments of God had created in me when death appeared to be inevitable."

The book had a tolerable success in Paris.

Unfortunately, Choisy was so vain and conceited that he imagined that everybody was praising him for leading a Christian life, and he rushed into a wild excess of zeal. Dangeau said, "Alas, I had hardly proved to this numskill the existence of God than I found him willing to believe in the baptism of church bells."[2]

[1] The first is by Dangeau ; the second by both ; the third and fourth by Choisy alone.

[2] D'Alembert. *Elegy of Dangeau.*

Soon afterwards, Choisy was given a position in the suite of the Ambassador to the King of Siam. This tickled the sense of humour of the Parisians, and "the man in the street" might be heard humming to himself to a popular tune of the day:

> Choisy, converted by Dangeau,
> Is sent to China as a preacher;
> He's a good Christian *now*, we know,
> But imitates his latest teacher.
> Should he meet a Dangeau in the East,
> He would turn Mussulman at least.

. . . . . .

The embassy of which Choisy was appointed a member left Brest on 3rd May, 1685. The chief of the expedition was the Chevalier de Chaumont, and he carried an autograph letter from Louis XIV to the King of Siam.

To beguile the tedium of a long sea-voyage, the Abbé began a diary in which he recorded all the important or trivial incidents of the journey; he also studied the Portuguese language and astronomy. As might have been expected, this effeminate being suffered severely from sea-sickness. He took a not unnatural aversion to preserves, and says that what he most wanted was good vinegar and brandy, experience having taught him that the latter was "very refreshing." He remembered that when he was a child, his mother had banished from the house, cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon, as being heating to the boy's blood, and hardly tolerated salt; and he wondered what she would say if she could see him

eating salt cod, herrings and anchovies, and topping up with a glass of spirits.

At the request of de Chaumont, Choisy began to study Siamese.

"You would not believe, perhaps, that the little music I knew greatly facilitated the pronunciation of Siamese. It would be very nice if I could converse at my ease with the King of Siam. He would not be displeased, as he is of a curious and enquiring disposition. I should have many things to tell him when we were sometimes closeted together."

For he has no intention of playing second fiddle at Siam, and his note-book shows that he was very much afraid that was the instrument de Chaumont intended him to play.

"We had four months at sea, and the Chevalier de Chaumont had not spoken openly to me. That began to worry me, for I foresaw that, if that continued, I should be a mere zero at Siam. But one day, I heard him, through the partition which separated our two cabins, reciting to himself his speech to the King. A week afterwards (for he still kept harping on the same note) I told him that I had heard the most beautiful speech in the world. Thereupon he took me into his cabin and repeated to me his harangue. I told him it was faultless. Then he began to talk of what he had to do in that country, and I gave him my humble opinion. He is a good sort of fellow, honest and accomplished—except that he does not know geometry. I had not much

difficulty in making him understand that, perhaps, I might be very useful to him. After that he would not so much as spit without consulting me. But a pleasant thought came into my mind; if the Ambassador died before or when we arrived at Siam, I should be the Ambassador, and in that case I should have to make the official harangue. As soon as said, almost as quickly done."

After a voyage of nearly five months, the mission arrived at its destination, the 24th September, 1685. A great discussion then arose as to the form of etiquette to be observed in presenting the letter of Louis XIV to the King of Siam.

"I proposed to the Ambassador that instead of placing the letter in the hands of the Siamese mandarins, he should let me show it to the people, and then carry it to the King. He consented, and was glad to give me pleasure, and M. Constance, who wished the letter shown to all the people, was also satisfied. In that way I managed to get an honourable position, whereas before I had but a second-rate part and an imaginary status. He who bears a letter from the greatest monarch in the world must needs be honoured; they will give me one of the King's *ballons;* I shall go to the audience chamber by the side of the Ambassador, and I shall have an appointed and honourable place."

When the day arrived, the letter was enclosed in a gold vase covered with brocade, and received the respectful homage of the mandarins. Then M. de

Chaumont handed it to the Abbé, who placed it in a long and narrow boat with a dome (called a *ballon*) in the middle. De Chaumont and Choisy were in other boats, and the procession went up the river to the royal palace.

When they landed, the Ambassador took the letter again and placed it on a car; then he got into a gold chair, and was carried by ten men. Choisy was in a similar chair carried by eight men, and thought that he had really "become Pope."

When the embassy arrived in the audience chamber:

"As soon as all the gentlefolks were placed, we heard trumpets and drums sound within the palace, and those without replied; it was the signal that the King was about to mount the throne. Then M. Constance in his bare feet, that is to say in his socks with his shoes off, ascended the steps as they ascend the 'holy steps' at Rome, only still more reverently, and the Ambassador followed him. I was at his left hand, bearing the King's letter. His Excellency took off his hat when he was on the top step, as soon as he saw the King, and made a profound bow in the French manner. I made no bow, because I was carrying the letter. We walked between two rows of mandarins down on their knees, with their faces to the ground; it appears that a brother-in-law of the King of Cambodia was amongst them. The Ambassador made a second bow, and advanced within speaking distance of the

throne, and in front of the seat which had been prepared for him. He made a third bow, and began his harangue, standing uncovered, but at the second word, he sat down and put on his hat. I remained standing still holding the King's letter."

The delivery of this wonderful letter offered some difficulty, for the King was behind a sort of high window, and the embassy was down below. De Chaumont whispered to Choisy, " I don't know how I can give him the letter except on the end of a stick, and that I will not do."

" ' I own that I was much perplexed,' says Choisy, ' and did not know what advice to give him. I thought of bringing the Ambassador's chair near the throne, so that he could stand on it, but when he had finished his harangue, he advanced boldly towards the throne, holding the gold vase which contained the letter, and presented it to the King, without raising his elbow, as though the King had been on the same level with himself. M. Constance, who was crouching on the ground behind us, cried to the Ambassador, " Higher, higher," but de Chaumont did not raise his arms, and the King was obliged to lean half his body out of the window in order to take the letter, which made him laugh. For the fact is that he had said to M. Constance, " All that is outside the palace I leave to you ; do your utmost to honour the French Ambassador, I will see to the arrangements inside the palace." He would not have his throne lowered, or a stage

erected, and said that if the Ambassador would not raise the letter up to the window, he would stoop to receive it. I was quite delighted at his conduct, and I could willingly also have embraced the Ambassador for his share in transaction.' "

The precise object of the mission is by no means clear. The Abbé confesses that he did not know what it was, and the King of Siam seems to have been in the same position. Possibly there was no other object than a desire on the part of Louis XIV to impress a foreign potentate with an idea of his greatness and power. Whether there was more than this no one but the Ambassador knew; and the Siamese monarch asked M. Constance if he had had any conference with the Ambassador. M. Constance replied that he had, but the representative of Louis XIV had to maintain his dignity and could not be addressed familiarly, and therefore he (Constance) had addressed himself to Choisy, with whom he had had several talks.

" ' But how do you converse with the French *talapoin?* ' asked the King, ' for he does not know Siamese.' "

Constance replied that he spoke in Portuguese, and Choisy replied in Italian, for he had resided in Italy, and was even present at the Pope's election.

" ' Then,' said the King, ' as he intends to return to Europe, I might ask him to go to Rome and

present my respects to His Holiness: what do you say?'"

M. Constance replied that he had no doubt Choisy would willingly undertake the mission, and would esteem it a great honour, especially if the King would promise to protect the Christian religion throughout his dominions. The King replied, "Good, good! I will do so." And the next day he asked Choisy if it was true that he knew the Pope. The Abbé answered that it was perfectly true, and that he had been the first person in the world to kiss the feet of His Holiness after his election. "If that is the case," said the King, "I will ask you to execute some commissions for me at Rome."

The King said no more on that occasion, but he had said quite enough to set the Abbé's vanity starting off at full gallop.

"No doubt he will give me further details at the farewell interview," writes Choisy. "I must own the truth that I am very fortunate, and as I cannot remain here, how could I return to Europe in a manner more agreeable and suitable to an ecclesiastic. I had the service of God in view when I came hither, and I shall have it equally in returning. It is very good for our religion that an idolatrous King should show respect to the highest person in the world, and should send him presents from the other end of the earth. I feel sure that the King (Louis XIV) will be greatly pleased to see the Vicar of Jesus Christ honoured by the King of Siam, and one

of his own subjects charged with such a commission."

The King of Siam appears to have been of a very amiable and obliging disposition. "The King of France has a disinterested friendship for me," he informed M. Constance. "He proposes that I should become a Christian, and what interest can he have in that? He asks me to learn his religion, and as I do not want to displease him, I must do so, and let him know that I have done so."

. . . . . .

The mission remained in Siam three months, and set sail for France on 22nd December, 1685. De Choisy, who had now become very devout, said his first Mass and preached to the crew on 6th January, 1686.

In June of that year, we find him installed at Paris, and an object of attraction to the fashionable world, who wanted to know all about his travels.

"Everybody calls on the Abbé de Choisy to hear all that he has to tell us," writes Mdlle. de Scudéry. "I think I shall go myself when the rush is over." She adds, as an afterthought, that he had become very religious.

Being, of course, unacquainted with events which had happened during his absence, he was unaware that the Cardinal de Bouillon had fallen into disgrace, and he made a grievous blunder in sending to that prelate the presents which the King of Siam had entrusted to him. This excusable blunder was

just the sort of thing that annoyed Louis XIV, and that techy monarch sent for Choisy and gave him a bad quarter of an hour.

"'Did you do that out of your own head?' cried the King.

"'Sire, I spoke to the Chevalier de Chaumont, and he approved of it. I could not guess that the Cardinal de Bouillon had been unfortunate enough to incur your displeasure. Your Majesty had not long since given him the Abbey of Cluny.'

"'That is enough!' and Choisy left the royal presence with his tail between his legs. 'The courtiers,' he naively adds, wanted to compliment me on the result of my interview, but I was very modest and passed quickly through them. I shut myself up in a little room at an inn, and without making reproaches, I thanked God that He had humiliated me. I had been too proud. I thought I had done wonders during my travels, and that the Jesuits and the Missionaries would be satisfied, but the reception I met with from the King had lowered my pride; yes, knowing myself to be innocent, my conscience was at ease."

The Abbé had played the woman so long that he had acquired many feminine characteristics—flattery being one of them, and by the use of that artifice he managed to regain the royal favour.

After having published his *Journal of a Voyage to Siam*, he wrote a *Life of David*,[1] in which Louis XIV

[1] The book also contains an interpretation of the Psalms.

could easily recognize his own portrait, painted in very flattering colours. In the dedication, Choisy wrote :

" Your Majesty has loaded me with benefits from the time of my early infancy, and therefore I, more than anyone else, shall always be, to the last moment of my life, Your Majesty's most humble, most obedient, and most faithful subject and servant."

Another book, the *Life of Solomon*, opens with the phrase, " Your Majesty will, without difficulty, recognize yourself in the series of glorious actions of these two great princes."

These flatteries had the effect of making the King deign to forget Choisy's previous blunder. The Abbé writes :

" Six months later, I presented to the King the *Life of David* and the Psalms, which he received most graciously. I am under an obligation to Père La Chaise, who had spoken in my favour, and procured for me a private interview with the King. His Majesty was well aware that I had not committed any serious offence ; indeed, in the following year he allowed me to go and see the Cardinal, who was at Tarascon, and very ill. The King told Père La Chaise that he was glad that some friends should visit the Cardinal whilst he was ill. Alas ! the poor Prince had, perhaps, a good opinion of me, and he did right to have such an opinion at that time, for I had recently returned from my travels in the East, where I had acquired a kind of superficial knowledge without any special study on my part."

The *Journal of a Voyage to Siam*, and the *Life of David*, though not very remarkable productions, procured for their author a *fauteuil* at the Academy. He was elected one of the Forty Immortals on 25th August, 1687, in place of the Duc de Saint Aignan, deceased.

In 1692, the Abbé's apartment in the Luxembourg was frequented by a certain number of Academicians, including Messieurs Bon, Renaudot, Caumartin, d'Herbelot, Guénégaud, Charles Perrault, Fontenelle, President Cousin, and the Abbés Testu, de Dangeau, and de Mailly. Choisy was named, or named himself, perpetual secretary of this *coterie*, which, however, had only a short existence.

He also published an *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, which he dedicated to Madame de Maintenon ; and also brought out bteween 1688 and 1695 histories of Philippe de Valois, Charles V, Charles VI, and St. Louis.

One day the young Duke of Burgundy asked the Abbé how he would manage to state that Charles VI was insane. " Monseigneur, I shall say that he was insane. When once a man is dead, only his virtues remain." When the Duc de Montausier, who had formerly made very sarcastic remarks about " Madame de Sancy," heard this anecdote he said, " I am sorry that I am not one of the friends of this hermaphrodite."

The expression used by the Duke was not inappropriate, for in the privacy of his apartment at the Luxembourg, skirts, petticoats, frippery and

gewgaws had once more made their appearance, and it was in such womanish attire that the old man composed his *History of the Church.*

"This history," writes d'Alembert, "smells too much of the garb in which it was composed, for the author could not resolve to deprive himself of the feminine attire of which he was so fond, but which he no longer dared to wear openly for fear of the scorn of his fellow-men. He therefore wore it when he was alone, not suspecting that even in that solitude there was a witness more to be feared than man. To appreciate the literary value of these ecclesiastical annals it will perhaps suffice to call to mind the picture of an old priest, more than seventy years of age, dressed in a costume unsuited to his age, sex and condition, working on a history of martyrs and anchorites, and putting on ridiculous finery with the same hand with which he wrote the decisions of councils. Sometimes, indeed, he would stop writing, look sadly at the strange garb he wore, and deplore how unworthy he was to depict the Saints Antony, Pacome, Augustine, and Athanasius."

He said about the book, "Thank God, I have finished the *History of the Church.* Now I am going to study it."

The Abbé de Choisy died at Paris the 16th August, 1724, aged eighty-one.

. . . . . .

In addition to the historical and religious works already mentioned, and the biography, or autobiography, entitled *Memoirs of the Comtesse des Barres*, the Abbé also left us a novel—*The New Astræa*—which relates the adventures of a handsome young man, named Celadon, who took a delight in dressing himself up as a girl. A few extracts will show what resemblance the imaginary Celadon bore to the Abbé.

"... Leonidas put the dress of a nymph upon Celadon. It was nothing new to him, for the handsome young shepherd had often dressed himself as a woman, and this disguise so pleased him that he had practised all the little mincing ways and affectations of a girl who strives to please young men. Leonidas presided at his adornment; his fair hair, which curled naturally, had become so long since his mishap, that it was easy to dress it with ribbons and flowers."

. . . . . .

"She (i.e. Celadon) was put to bed, and for two days kept her room, and received the visits of all the neighbours. She was not in the least embarrassed and looked beautiful as an angel. The night-cap of the nymph was very simple. It was a kind of small white cap, trimmed with lace, encompassing the face, and fastened under the chin with a ribbon tied in a bow."

. . . . . .

"He had on a robe of violet satin, embroidered with gold and silver flowers. The waist was clearly defined, and he had taken care to pad the dress in the necessary places. His hair was tied behind with white and violet ribbons, and a ribbon sewn with pearls; he had also a necklace, and diamond earrings."

. . . . . .

"It is true that dressing did not at all inconvenience him; he had no need of anyone to help him, his own native skill, and the pleasure he took in the task, had saved him an apprenticeship."

. . . . . .

"One day Alexia (Celadon) woke up first, rose quickly, and put on the robe of Astræa. 'My dear,' he said to her, as soon as she had opened her eyes, 'I am going to be a shepherdess to-day, and you a nymph.'"

This young Celadon, who is as beautiful as a girl, is precisely the sort of hero we should expect the most feminine of men to create. He is the highest expression of the author's mind; the ideal towards which all his efforts tend.

PHILIP OF ORLEANS AND ABBÉ D'ENTRAGUES

CHAPTER V

(1640–1701)

PHILIP, Duke of Orleans, son of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, and brother of Louis XIV, was born at St. Germain in 1640. He had the title of Duke of Anjou until the death of Gaston of Orleans in 1660, but from the time of his brother's accession to the throne in 1643, he was invariably known by the simple title of " Monsieur."

He married in 1661 Henrietta of England, sister of Charles II. She died on 30th June, 1670 ; it is believed of poison, and it is not absolutely certain that her husband was not concerned in her death, for being of a very jealous disposition, he did not approve of the attentions his wife received from her royal brother-in-law. A year later, Monsieur remarried, taking as his second wife Charlotte Elizabeth, daughter of the Elector Palatine.

Philip of Orleans, who was " more afraid of sunburn than bullets," gained some distinction as a soldier. In 1677, he beat William of Orange at Cassel, and also took St. Omer. Louis XIV, jealous of his first successes, took care that he should not gain any others by relieving him of his command.

He did, however, take some part in the war of the Augsbourg League.

Monsieur died at St. Cloud in 1701.

In reality Monsieur should not be included in the category of the persons we are studying, the reason being that his mania for dressing himself up as a woman arose specially from his desire to please his "lovers." We have already heard about his fondness for feminine attire in the *Memoirs of the Abbé de Choisy*. Cases of psychical feminism, not involving sexual inversion, are curious and deserving of study; but persons of the same description as Philip of Orleans are so numerous in the history of our own days that they do not deserve that we should pause to examine them.

It is natural that an individual who is physically pretending to a sex to which he does not belong, should try his best to resemble that sex in costume and manner of behaviour.

Therefore it is only from the anecdotic point of view that we are concerned with Philip of Orleans.

In his apartment at the Palais Royal, which he had occupied since 1661, Monsieur indulged in these strange fads. It must be acknowledged that the education he had received had fitted him rather to deck himself in front of a mirror than to play a glorious part on fields of battle, and we can hardly understand how it was that he showed some courage in the trenches of St. Omer. The manner of his education had been very similar to that of Choisy's. As to the motives which induced Anne of Austria

PHILIP DUKE OF ORLEANS ('MONSIEUR') AS A YOUNG MAN

After an early French engraving

and Cardinal Mazarin to bring up the prince as though he were a princess, we can only surmise; possibly it was a fear that he would one day prove a thorn in the side of his brother, Louis XIV.[1]

Scandalmongers say that there was some of Mazarin's Italian blood in his veins.

We do not definitely know whether Monsieur was a handsome man; Saint-Simon, who was certainly not one of his admirers, writes of him:

"He was a little pot-bellied man, mounted on such high heels that they were more like stilts; always dressed like a woman, covered with rings and bracelets; precious stones everywhere; a long wig, black and powdered, and ribbons wherever they could be placed; also redolent of all sorts of perfumery. He was accused of putting on an imperceptible touch of rouge."

The Princess Palatine, although his wife, was not blind to his defects, and agrees with Saint-Simon on the whole.

"Though he had not a mean appearance, he was very short; his hair was as black as jet, the eyebrows thick and brown, a long narrow face, a big thick nose, a very small mouth, and bad teeth. He had the manners of a woman rather than those of a man. He liked to play, chat, eat well, dance, and perform his toilet—in short, everything that women love."

[1] An allusion to this is made in the *Memoirs of the Abbé de Choisy*, *vide* p. 12, *supra*.

Madame de Motteville is more indulgent :

" It is to be wished that efforts had been made to wean him from the trivial amusements he had acquired in his youth. He loved to be with women and young girls, and attire them and dress their hair. He knew what suited each one better than the most expert maid, and his greatest joy when he was grown up was to adorn them, and to purchase jewellery to lend or give to those who were fortunate enough to be his favourites. He was well made, his features appeared to be perfect, his black eyes were bright and handsome, with an expression of mildness and gravity. His mouth somewhat resembled that of the queen, his mother ; his black hair, in large natural curls, suited his complexion, and his nose, which was aquiline, was well formed. If age does not diminish his beauty, he would rival the handsomest women of the day, but it does not appear that he will ever be tall."

Madame de la Fayette looks upon Monsieur's feminine disguise with a lenient eye and a tolerant philosophy.

" Monsieur was greatly attached to the Queen, his mother. All his inclinations were towards feminine occupations—in which he differed entirely from his brother. He was handsome and well made, but of a beauty more suitable to a princess than to a prince."

This mania of the Prince for donning female attire did not fail to draw upon him considerable

ridicule, and in a country in which, as has been said, everything begins and ends with a song, a great many indifferent verses were made about him. A paraphrase of a portion of one of these is given as a specimen :

I once was a good-looking lad
All the qualities I had
Suitable to the degree
Of my distinguished family.
The fair sex I so much admire,
That often I myself attire
With ribbons, patches, diamonds, pearls
And other things much worn by girls,
Until at last myself I thought
A perfect lady of the Court.
There's one thing though that's very vexing
About this process of unsexing,
For, to my cost, I now discover
The girls won't have me as a lover ;
They're very friendly, but I fear
They take me for what I appear.
The remedy, methinks, is simple,
I will discard the robe and wimple,
Avoid all dangers that may lurk in
My old contempt for breeks and jerkin,
And prove to them—if so I can—
I'm really, after all, a man.

Much more of the same sort of stuff could be quoted, but the above anecdote will suffice, as Monsieur cannot be properly included in the category of personages with whom this book is concerned.

CHAPTER VI

ABBÉ D'ENTRAGUES, a contemporary of Abbé de Choisy and Philip of Orleans, was a very curious and interesting personage, and it is matter for regret that we have very little information regarding him. Saint-Simon says that he moved in the best society, partly because he belonged to the de Balzac family, and partly because his brother had married the half-sister, by the same mother, of Louise de la Vallière, the King's mistress. Why the Abbé and his brother should have assumed the name of d'Entragues when they were entitled to bear the honourable name of de Balzac, Saint-Simon confesses he does not know.

From the *Correspondence of the Duchess of Orleans* we learn that the education of young d'Entragues very much resembled that of de Choisy.

"D'Entragues has plenty of wit, but he has been brought up in a most ridiculous manner by his mother, who wanted a daughter and never had one, so that he received the education of a young girl. It may be said that he has become a real coquette with all the faults of one."

Introduced into the society of Princess di Conti, d'Entragues became celebrated for his wit, his mis-

chievousness, and his very remarkable ability in "setting people by the ears." According to Saint-Simon, he was "a tall, well-made man of a singular pallor, which he maintained by being constantly bled, which he called his 'dainty.' He slept with his arms fastened above his head in order to keep his hands white, and although he dressed as an abbé, it was in such a singular manner that everybody regarded him with astonishment."

Exiled from Paris, on account of his dissolute and vicious life, he took refuge at Caen, and was visited there by Monsieur Pelletier de Souci. Saint-Simon reports this interview:

"He found a nice clean bedroom, with a nice clean bed in it, open on all sides. In the bed was a person sitting up and doing tapestry work; elegantly dressed, wearing a woman's night-cap trimmed with lace, top-knot and other finery, corset laced with ribbons, bedgown, and patches. At this sight, Pelletier drew back, thinking he had enter the bedroom of some woman of easy virtue, murmured some excuses, and would have gained the door, which was close behind him. But the person in bed called him, begged him to approach, gave his name, and began to laugh. It was Abbé d'Entragues, who generally sleeps in a garb of this sort, but always in a woman's night-cap, more or less decorated."

The exile was of short duration, and the Abbé could return to Paris, but he hardly arrived there before he was guilty of a folly of another sort.

"An abbé, who is a friend of mine, and belongs to one of the best families in France, and has plenty of wit, but is a trifle crack-brained, came to the conclusion that he did not belong to the true religion, because the poor Protestants were being persecuted. So he resolved to place himself amongst the Protestants, and he went to the chaplain of the Dutch Ambassador, and abjured the Catholic faith. Afterwards he went, on Christmas Eve, to pay a visit to a lady, who invited him to go with her to the Midnight Mass. Poor Abbé d'Entragues replied, 'I shall never go to Mass again in all my life.' This very much surprised all who were present, and some one asked him, 'Why won't you go to Mass?' He calmly replied, 'Since I have had the happiness to take the Communion in both kinds with six hundred of my brothers, I am resolved never to go to Mass again.' This set all Paris agog: the bishop and all the priests met together, and went to my son and asked him to put the Abbé in the Bastille. The poor fellow came to me at night time, and asked my advice as to what he ought to do. I scolded him well for his imprudence, and told him the only thing to do was to make his escape as quickly as possible. He followed my advice and, thank God, got clean away."[1]

Abbé d'Entragues escaped into Flanders, and might easily have gone to Tournai, where no one would have thought of looking for him; but,

[1] From a letter to the Regent's mother, 4th January, 1720.

instead of that, he took a fancy to go to Lille, and "sent in his name to the Commandant of the town." The Duchess of Orleans, the Regent's mother, who was a good friend to the Abbé and wished him well, writes and complains :

"I think Abbé d'Entragues has become quite mad. I wrote to you that he had followed the advice I gave him, and had fled and had arrived in Flanders. He was close to Tournai, where he would have been in safety, but instead of going there, he went to Lille, where he remained several days. As no one there knew him, he ran no risk if he stayed quiet, but, on the contrary, he must show himself in public places ; he must, like a Jew, exchange bank-notes ; and inveigh against my son and the government. The Commandant of Lille was informed of this and had him arrested, and then it was discovered he was the Abbé d'Entragues. Did you ever hear of such madness ? My son did all he could to save him, he gave him time to get away and did not have him pursued, and then this idiot goes and speaks against him in a public place."[1]

Locked up in the fortress of Lille, he was treated very leniently ; he was given everything he asked for, even dolls, "with which he played like a child."[2]

After a detention of a few months, he was allowed to return to Paris, where—to prove his return to

[1] Letter to the Regent's mother, 11th January, 1720.
[2] Letter of 26th January, 1720.

the fold of the Church—he " for some time continued to appear at Mass carrying a huge breviary."[1] His original mania for feminine attire reasserted itself, and he appeared in full ball dress whenever an opportunity occurred.

D'Entragues lived to the age of eighty ; and it was said of him that " he finished in a very Christian manner a life which had not been very Christian."

[1] Duchess of Orleans.

THE CHEVALIER D'ÉON

(1728–1810)

CHAPTER VII

(1728–1761)

Birth—Infancy and childhood—Personal appearance—First disguise—Secret envoy of Louis XV—Russia and France—First voyage to Russia—Matched against Bestucheff—Second voyage to Russia—Bestucheff beaten—Diplomatic combinations—Return to France—Short military career.

CHARLES GENEVIÈVE LOUIS AUGUSTE TIMOTHÉE D'ÉON, born at Tonnerre, 5th October, 1728, was the son of Louis d'Éon de Beaumont and his wife, Françoise (*née* Charanton). His father was advocate to the Parliament of Paris, King's Counsellor, and Mayor of Tonnerre.

We know very little about the childhood of the Chevalier d'Éon, except that he showed a precocity which astonished his preceptor, Abbé Marcenay, curé of the church of St. Pierre at Tonnerre. At twelve years of age, he came to Paris, where he finished his education at College Mazarin. He passed examinations as Doctor of Civil Law and Canon Law; took the necessary oaths before Parliament, and became secretary to Bertier de Sauvigny, an old friend of the family.

In 1749, he obtained the post of "Royal Censor" in succession to his uncle, Michel d'Éon de Ger-

mygny; and as he had written panegyrics on the Duchess de Penthièvre and Comte d'Ons-en-Bray, he was received into the most select circles of society. He was much in the company of Marshal de Belles-Isles and Prince de Conti—whose madrigals he retouched—and was looked upon as a "thorough good fellow," whilst, on the other hand, the publication of his *Historical Essay on Finance*[1] procured him the reputation of being an indefatigable worker.

Physically, d'Éon appeared to be rather a blushing young maiden than a vigorous lad.[2] Even in infancy, he had a very girlish look, and this still further increased as he grew up: his arms and neck had all the grace and delicacy of a woman; no beard sullied his cheeks; his hips and bust were well rounded, and no princess could boast of a more tiny foot.

About the Chevalier's first appearance in women's clothes, we have no information but what can be

[1] Historical Essay on the various situations of France in regard to Finance during the reign of Louis XIV and the Regency of the Duke of Orleans, by M. d'Éon de Beaumont. Amsterdam, 1753. 12mo., 186 pp.

[2] On this subject we have, unfortunately, no other authority than Gaillardet, one of the earliest historians of the Chevalier, and his statements are to be received with caution. He collaborated with Dumas *père* in writing *La Tour de Nesles*, and seems to have employed the same vivid imagination when he undertook historical investigations. In justice to him, however, it must be said that he has made a psychological study of the Chevalier d'Eon that is very interesting, and not farther removed from the truth than many other books of the same kind which claim to have been written with a due regard to minute accuracy.

derived from Gaillardet's narrative—to which something may have been added for the sake of dramatic effect. He states that some friends of the Chevalier —Lauraguais, Ste. Foix, Dampierre, Bezenval, du Barry, and the Comtesse de Rochefort, a young widow—met together to discuss the dresses to be worn at a masked ball which was to take place in a few days' time. They all agreed that d'Éon must be dressed as a woman. The night arrived, and when he entered the ball-room, "a murmur of admiration ran through the assembly." Even Louis XV, who was present, could not conceal the admiration he felt for the "young beauty."

Some of the Chevalier's friends noticed this, and determined to play a practical joke on the King. He was given to understand that a meeting with the young beauty could be arranged, and was overjoyed at the prospect of a new love affair. The conspirators then insiduously hinted to Madame de Pompadour that she would have to fear a new rival.

To what extent d'Éon was a party to the plot is not clear, but according to Gaillardet's account, the Chevalier, wearing his feminine garb, was shown into a magnificent apartment, and had not been there long before Madame de Pompadour entered in a towering rage. A few words sufficed to quiet her apprehensions, and she went away satisfied. She had hardly left before the King entered, and d'Éon had to explain again that he was not what he seemed to be.

The King, though grossly deceived, was not angry:

"'*Mon ami*,' he said, 'are you as intelligent when a handsome boy as you are discreet when a pretty girl?'

"'If your Majesty will put my zeal and devotion to the trial, I can promise you that I will stand the test.'

"'So be it! Preserve absolute silence as to what has passed between us, and be ready to execute my orders when you hear from me.'"

A few days later d'Éon received orders to call upon Prince de Conti, and was charged with a diplomatic mission.

The incident related above, though it sounds improbably romantic, might nevertheless be true when we consider the extraordinary liberty of the eighteenth century, and the character of the Chevalier, who besides his attractions as a pretty girl, had a talent for intrigue, and knew how "to look after number one." And thus we find him involved in the secret diplomacy carried on by the King, Prince de Conti, Comte de Broglie, and M. Tercier, the chief clerk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The principal aim of the last mentioned three was to thwart the official policy of Louis XV, and raise Conti to the throne of Poland.[1]

Although diplomatic relations between Russia and

[1] Boutaric *Unpublished Correspondence of Louis XV.* Two vols., 8vo. Paris, 1866.
Duc de Broglie. *The King's Secret.* Two vols., 8vo. Paris, 1888.

France had been broken off for the last fourteen years, the Empress Elizabeth cherished a friendly feeling towards Louis XV. But her Chancellor, Bestucheff, was an enemy to France, and all the emissaries charged to arrange a renewal of diplomatic relations between the two countries had found their efforts suppressed or brought to nought.

A Scotch nobleman in the service of Louis XV—the Chevalier Mackenzie Douglas—and d'Éon were now appointed to make a fresh attempt. In order to avoid the suspicions of Bestucheff, a pretext had to be invented, and it was pretended that the object of the mission was to study the mineralogy of Russia. Besides which (according to Gaillardet) the King and Conti were of opinion that d'Eon would never be suspected, as he would be disguised as a woman, and would pass as the niece of Douglas.[1]

[1] The voyage of d'Éon to Russia has been doubted, for there are no direct proofs of it. The Duc de Broglie, in his book *The King's Secret*, says that there is no trace of this voyage in the documents preserved at the Foreign Office. The Empress Catherine also, in a letter dated 13th April, 1778, declares that " Elizabeth never had a ' lady reader ' and did not know Monsieur or Mademoiselle d'Éon, but he was known to her (Catherine) as a sort of political errand-boy (*galopin*) in the employ of Marquis de l'Hôpital and Baron de Breteuil."

As the mission was a secret one, and not a diplomatic one, it is not astonishing that there is no mention of the voyage in the records of the Foreign Office.

D'Éon makes no mention of his being disguised as a woman, but the greater part of his papers were destroyed after his quarrel with Beaumarchais. But in a letter written by d'Éon to Comte de Broglie, 5th July, 1771, he says that Princess d'Askoff (whom he had known in Russia) had good reasons for assuring the English Court that he was a woman ; which would seem to imply that she had only known him as a woman when he was in Russia.

The preparations for this mysterious expedition were not completed till the summer of 1755, when Douglas set out on his journey. Early in October in that year he was in Russia. But to obtain an introduction to the Empress was a more difficult matter, for the British Ambassador, Williams, had promised Bestucheff that no British subject should be presented at Court unless presented by the Ambassador. Douglas put on a bold face, and asked the Ambassador to present him to the Empress, but Williams failed to see why an interview with the Czarina was necessary for a study of mineralogy. Douglas was therefore suspected of having other objects in view, and was shadowed by a host of spies.

Foreseeing the danger that he ran, Douglas made haste to recross the frontier, but five months later —in the spring of 1756—he was back in St. Petersburg, and this time furnished with proper credentials to show that he had come as a plenipotentiary charged to bring about a renewal of diplomatic relations. D'Éon accompanied him as Secretary to the Embassy.

Historians cannot understand how it came about that Douglas, after an ignominious failure the first time, was able to return in triumph, and the absence of all documents on the subject makes the mystery still greater. There is, however, a tradition (which may be nothing more than a legend) that d'Éon had stayed in Russia after the flight of Douglas; had, in feminine guise, and under the name of Made-

moiselle Lia de Beaumont, niece of Douglas, got himself presented at Court by Comte Woronzow, Vice-Chancellor of the Empire, and had, by adroit flattery or diplomacy, paved the way for the return of Douglas. To give an extra dramatic touch to the story, it is asserted that Douglas being prevented by Bestucheff and Williams from presenting his credentials, passed them over to d'Éon, who gave them to the Empress, concealed in the cover of a volume of Montesquieu's Works.[1]

This stage trick rather pleased the romantic Empress, and she commissioned d'Éon to carry to Louis XV a favourable reply as to the renewal of international relations. It was just about this time that Douglas returned to St. Petersburg, and appointed the Chevalier d'Éon Secretary to the Embassy.

With the help of Voronzoff, and Count Ivan Schouvaloff, the favourite of the Empress, Douglas and d'Éon succeeded in checkmating Chancellor Bestucheff and the British Ambassador, and were received officially as Envoys of the King of France. But their enemies did not give up the game, and

[1] According to another version, the two travellers, whilst on their road to Russia, stayed at a castle of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, in Lower Saxony, where Princess Sophia Charlotte, one of the daughters of the Grand Duke, took a great liking to " la Chevalière d'Éon," and gave her a letter of introduction to Mademoiselle Nordege Stein, who was one of the Maids of Honour of the Empress Elizabeth. This story does not obtain credence among historians, for, as a matter of fact, little or nothing is known about Mademoiselle Stein, but on the other hand we cannot absolutely discredit it, for as we shall see later, it may possibly contain a particle of truth.

used every means they could to destroy any influence the French envoys had obtained. Efforts were made to imprison, and even murder Douglas and his secretary, but they escaped all perils, and finally gained the favour of the Empress, after which matters took a more favourable turn.

Elizabeth, however, plainly refused to entertain the idea of an alliance with France, or to make any agreement as to Poland. She proposed to bestow upon Conti the title of Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, and to raise him to the rank of Duke of Courland.[1]

But whilst these negotiations were going on, Conti had a quarrel with the Marquise de Pompadour, and as Louis had to give way to all the caprices of his masterful mistress, Conti fell into disgrace, and d'Éon received orders that in future he was not to correspond with anyone except Tercier and Comte de Broglie.

Although the secret mission resulted in failure, the official mission was a brilliant success. The treaty which had been concluded between Bestucheff and Williams was annulled. Russia paid back the subsidies she had received from England; and the

[1] As d'Éon had several secret interviews with the Empress, it is possible that he donned female attire in order to allay suspicion and deceive the spies who watched all his actions. The employment of this disguise would explain the legend that he had always worn feminine garb from the time of his first arrival in Russia, and would also furnish a key to certain allusions to be found in the letters of Marquis de l'Hôpital, and also in a note in which Louis XV speaks of the services rendered by *Mademoiselle* d'Éon.

troops assembled in Livonia and Courland joined the armies of Louis XV and Maria Theresa. An exchange of ambassadors was also agreed upon; France chose the Marquis de l'Hôpital, and Russia, Bestucheff; but before the *chassé-croisé* could be effected, trouble arose with Turkey.

In the treaty between France and Austria, and in which Russia had now joined as a third party, it was stipulated that the independence of Turkey should be respected. Bestucheff pointed out to Elizabeth that in signing such a treaty, she violated the "old Muscovite gospel," and the oath taken by her predecessors to deliver Constantinople. He also persuaded Austria that it was contrary to her own interests to tie her hands with respect to Turkey. In spite of the firmness of d'Éon, who advised him not to yield an iota, Douglas was afraid of seeing all his plans brought to nought, and acting on the advice of Comte Esterhazy, the Austrian representative at St. Petersburg, it was agreed that Turkey should be guaranteed against the alliance in the treaty sent to Constantinople, but a secret compact should be concluded between the contracting parties leaving Russia free to do as she liked, and gulling the poor Turks into a false security. France, very properly, refused to be a party to such a villainous proceeding, and Douglas received from l'Hôpital (officially) and d'Éon (secretly) severe reproaches for his double-faced and undignified conduct.

The consequences might have been worse if

d'Éon had not come to his assistance. The Chevalier boldly went to Bestucheff and demanded that the scheme of the secret treaty should be abandoned. The terrible Chancellor blustered and bullied at first, but as he was aware that he was acting in opposition to the wishes of the Empress, he did not dare to go too far, so eventually gave in, and the secret treaty was destroyed. D'Éon shortly left St. Petersburg, carrying two copies of the real treaty; one to leave at Vienna for Maria Theresa, and the other to carry to Versailles for Louis XV. He also bore a plan of the strategical movements to be made by the Russian Army during the next campaign. The arrival of Marquis de l'Hôpital, who had superseded Douglas, coincided with the departure of d'Éon.

At Vienna, he heard the news of the great victory won by the Austrians over the Prussians at Prague. Hastening his departure, he arrived at Paris thirty-six hours before the courier who had been sent by Prince de Kaunitz to the Austrian Ambassador in France to announce the victory. The feat was all the more remarkable as the Chevalier had the misfortune to break his leg *en route*.

As a reward, Louis XV gave him a gold snuff-box set with precious stones, and with it, a commission as lieutenant in a regiment of dragoons. He did not join his regiment, as the King wished him to continue in the diplomatic service, but did not give him any appointment. D'Éon, having no duties of any sort, remained at Versailles horribly bored.

He was still idling there when he received a letter from l'Hôpital couched in rather enigmatic language:

"My dear Boy," wrote the Ambassador, "I was grieved to hear of your accident, and very glad to hear of your interviews with the old and new testament. Come and practice the gospel with us, and count upon my friendship and esteem."

After waiting some months, Tercier sent him instructions to proceed to Russia, and the Chevalier started on 21st September, 1757. On the road he passed through the Russian Army, and whilst there discovered that Bestucheff was carrying on a secret correspondence with Marshal Apraxin, who was commanding the Army. That was not the only one of his discoveries, for on arriving at St. Petersburg, he found out the hiding-place where the Chancellor concealed his secret correspondence. The Chevalier informed Woronzoff, who told Elizabeth.[1] The result was that Bestucheff was convicted of treason and banished to Siberia. Apraxin committed suicide, and more than 1800 persons were arrested for complicity. Woronzoff became Chancellor, and he favoured the French interests.

[1] "I informed Vice-Chancellor Woronzoff of the hiding-place in which was concealed the secret correspondence with the King of Prussia, Marshal Apraxin, and General Todtleben—a correspondence that had been carried on ever since the beginning of the war between Russia and Prussia. Bestucheff gave secret orders which were quite contrary to those officially sent from the *Chancellerie*."

In spite of these successes, d'Éon grew tired of diplomacy. He longed for military honours, and on 14th April, 1758, he wrote to Marshal de Belle-Isle, the Minister of War, to ask for a captaincy. He duly received the commission, but as he was not appointed to any particular regiment, he was only a captain "on paper." Moreover, fresh complications arose at St. Petersburg, which prevented him from leaving his post.

A fresh treaty, which still more closely united Louis XV and Maria Theresa against Russia, was signed on 30th December, 1758; but it was necessary to obtain the assent of the Czarina, which she was unwilling to give unless she got something out of it—the something in this case being a portion of Poland; and however desirous the Court of Versailles may have been to please Russia, it could not consent to let Russia absorb a portion of Polish territory.

This policy did not at all suit the views and wishes of l'Hôpital, who therefore carried out the orders he received from Versailles in a half-hearted or unwilling manner—often leaving to d'Éon the task of entangling or disentangling the threads of diplomacy in accordance with his own taste or fancy.

De Choiseul either could not or would not remove l'Hôpital, but he sent to St. Petersburg Baron de Breteuil with the title of "Minister Plenipotentiary approved by the King." The new Ambassador, of course, knew next to nothing about any secret

policy, and d'Éon was therefore instructed to "teach him the ropes."

To the Chevalier it appeared that de Breteuil had been sent "to do him out of his job," but he was rather pleased than otherwise, as it gave him another opportunity to ask to be incorporated in the army.[1]

At last he obtained that satisfaction, and he left St. Petersburg to bear to Paris the news that Russia had accepted the Treaty of 1758. He also carried recommendations of l'Hôpital and de Choiseul to the Minister of War.

Elizabeth presented him with a box encrusted with diamonds, and Woronzoff said, "I am sorry to lose you, although your first visit here, with Chevalier Douglas, cost my sovereign more than two hundred thousand men, and fifteen millions of roubles."[2]

The welcome which he had received from the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, and the recollection of pleasant hours he had passed with the Princess Sophia Charlotte, on the occasion of his first visit, incited him to pay a second visit to the castle, but a

[1] According to Gaillardet, there was a more romantic motive for the departure of the Chevalier. He had renewed his acquaintance with Mlle. Nordege Stein, and there had been some love passages between them. But the Empress also had taken a fancy to him, and was jealous of his attentions to her Maid of Honour. A jealous woman is always to be feared, and when she is a despotic Empress and of what the history books call "a licentious disposition" to boot, she is to be dreaded, and the chevalier urgently demanded his recall to France.

[2] Gaillardet.

difficulty presented itself. He had then been dressed as a woman, and he could not now appear in male attire without explaining the mystery of his disguise. But he made up his mind to "face the music," and was joyfully received. The Princess had now grown into a woman, and d'Éon rather regretted his masculine attire. Fortune favours lovers, as we all know, and it luckily happened that he fell ill, and was nursed by Sophia Charlotte, and revealed to her that he was no other than Mademoiselle Lia de Beaumont. There were plenty of chances for lovemaking when he was convalescent; and when he was quite cured, and the time came for a separation, there were tears on both sides.

D'Éon was warmly welcomed both at Paris and Versailles. He received a pension of two thousand livres, and permission "to serve during the next campaign as aide-de-camp to the Marshal and the Comte de Broglie in the army of the Upper Rhine."

He duly joined that army, and greatly distinguished himself, as the document annexed will show.

"Victor François, Duc de Broglie, etc. etc.

"Charles, Comte de Broglie, Chevalier, etc. etc.

"We certify that Monsieur d'Éon de Beaumont, Captain in the Antichamp regiment (of Dragoons)

went through the last campaign with us as our aide-de-camp, and that during the course of the said campaign, we often charged him to carry the orders of the General, and that on many occasions he gave proof of great intelligence and extreme bravery; notably at Hoexter, in executing in the presence and under the fire of the enemy, the dangerous duty of the removal of gunpowder and other property of the King; and also in the reconnoitring and engagement near Ultrop, where he was wounded in the head and thigh; and near Osterwick, where as second captain of a troop of eighty dragoons, under the command of Mr. de St. Victor, commanding the volunteer army, he charged most opportunely, and with much courage, the Prussian battalion of Rhees, whom they took prisoner, in spite of the great numerical superiority of the enemy.

"In faith of which, we have delivered the present certificate, signed with our hands, and sealed with our arms.

"Done at Cassel, 24th December, 1761.

"Signed MARSHAL DUC DE BROGLIE.
COMTE DE BROGLIE."

Despite his coolness and courage, d'Éon had but a short military career. In December, 1761, the Minister recalled him to Paris, with the intention of sending him to Russia to succeed Comte de Breteuil. But just at this time the Empress Elizabeth died,

so Breteuil was left at St. Petersburg, and d'Éon was named Secretary to the Duc de Nivernais, who was to be sent to England to conclude a treaty of peace with that country.

CHAPTER VIII

(1762–1766)

Mission to England—Secret diplomacy—Comte de Broglie in disgrace—D'Éon as plenipotentiary—Versailles hostile to the Chevalier—De Guerchy—Contest between de Guerchy and de Vergy—D'Éon's official diplomatic career comes to an end—A book that caused a scandal—Threats against Louis XV—De Nort as a negotiator—Verdict of the English Courts against d'Éon—D'Éon accuses de Guerchy of an attempt to poison him.

THE Duc de Nivernais and d'Eon embarked at Calais, 17th September, 1762, on board a vessel belonging to the Duke of Bedford. They did not find the English in a great hurry to make peace, their recent victory at Havana having increased their demands. Nevertheless, the preliminaries of peace were signed at Fontainebleau in November, and after a discussion which lasted some months, the treaty was ratified on 10th February, 1763. D'Éon was charged to convey the good news to Versailles.

The Duc de Nivernais having completed the mission with which he had been entrusted, thought he would retire, and suggested the name of Comte de Guerchy as his successor; his choice was approved of at Versailles, and de Guerchy appointed Ambassador on 16th February, 1763.

The curious mania of Louis XV for secret plots and correspondence reasserted itself. He had, at the instigation of his mistress, withdrawn his favour from the Marshal and Comte de Broglie, but he was under the rose and, unbeknown to her, often consulting his former ministers. Comte de Broglie, on his part, was drawing up plans for the invasion of England. Of course, they could not be carried into execution at a moment when the ink of the treaty of peace had hardly dried; but they would be ready for use on some future occasion. The project greatly pleased the King and Tercier. D'Éon was ordered to consult with Comte de Broglie as to the probable chance of success, and his cousin, d'Éon de Muloize, was also admitted into the conspiracy—his part being confined to the destruction or concealment of the papers in case the plot was discovered. The technical part was confided to an engineer named Carrelet de la Rozière. Of course, there was to be the secret correspondence with the King.

Louis wrote to d'Éon:

"The Chevalier d'Éon will receive my orders through Comte de Broglie, or Monsieur Tercier, as to the reconnoitring to be done in England, either on the coast or in the interior of the country, and he will conform to the instructions he may receive precisely as though he had received them direct from me. My intent is that he shall observe the most profound secrecy, and not give

information to any living being, not even to my Ministers."[1]

In addition to these instructions, Comte de Broglie writes to d'Éon, on 7th May, 1763, to tell him to keep all documents safe from the prying eye of Comte de Guerchy.

Duc de Praslin suspected the Chevalier of being too much attached to the Broglie clique. He sent for d'Éon, and requested him to give a full account of the battle of Fillingshausen. Sainte Foix and de Guerchy were also present at the interview.

The Chevalier did as desired, and ascribed to Comte de Soubise all the blunders attributed to Duc de Broglie. Praslin roughly interrupted him, "I know that it was quite the contrary of what you tell me; an intimate friend of mine was there," and he turned towards Guerchy. "You did not really see that my dear d'Éon." And he concluded with, "It is your fondness for the Broglies makes you say that."

"It is my fondness for the truth, Monsieur le Duc," replied the Chevalier. "I can only reply to your questions by stating what I know." D'Éon adds:

"The Minister's face grew longer, and he put on a sardonic air, but I persisted in assuring him, as I

[1] D'Éon invented nicknames for all the persons concerned. Thus the King was the "Avocat"; Tercier, his "procureur"; Broglie, his "substitut." The Duc de Nivernais was called "honied"; Duc de Praslin, "bitter," and Choiseul, "porcelain."

shall do all my life, that I had really seen and heard all I told him."

When he returned to London, where he was impatiently awaited by de Nivernais, he received from his protector the Cross of the Order of St. Louis. On 22nd May, 1763, de Nivernais left England.

Left alone in England, d'Éon began to squander money freely. He kept open table, and his guests were numerous and select. In July he was raised to the dignity of "Minister Plenipotentiary," and that promotion made him lose what little prudence he had—with the natural result that he had soon outrun the constable. He writes to Praslin:

"The position of Minister Plenipotentiary, which has been bestowed upon me unsolicited, has certainly not turned my head, thanks to the possession of a little philosophy, but it has caused me a lot of extra expense, as you will see by the enclosed memorandum for clothes for myself and servants and coachman. When I was Secretary of the Embassy I could go about in my uniform and wear linen cuffs; now I must, against my inclination, wear good clothes and lace cuffs. If the King's affairs are not going on too well, mine are going on still worse. Your kindness and your sense of justice will not permit this. . . .

"I have been nearly ten years in politics, and am neither richer nor more esteemed than at the beginning. I was promised much, but neither promises nor promisers now exist. Up to the

present, I have sown, but have gathered less than I sowed. My political tenancy being happily finished, I shall be obliged to put the key under the door, and become a total bankrupt if you have not the humanity to come to my aid with some extra remuneration. The more zeal and courage I put into my work, the poorer I become. My youth is past, and all that remains to me is bad health, which grows worse every day, and twenty thousand livres of debts. These small debts have so long worried me that they have absorbed all the faculties of my mind, and I cannot apply myself as I would wish to the King's affairs. The time for gathering in appears to me to have nearly arrived, and I beg of you to come to some decision regarding my present and future lot, my salary and the favours and kindness that I may expect from your sense of justice and your kind heart."

Not content with making debts, d'Éon had forestalled part of the salary of the next Ambassador, and this called forth a severe letter from Duc de Praslin :

"I should never have believed, Monsieur, that the title of Minister Plenipotentiary would have made you so quickly forget what you originally were ; and I did not expect to find your pretensions increase as you received fresh favours. (1) I never gave you any hopes that the expenses of your former voyage to Russia would be reimbursed, as three of my predecessors, to whom you had made the same

request, had apparently deemed that it was not a legitimate demand. (2) You complain to me of vain promises that have been made you, but that assuredly is not the manner that I have acted towards you. Remember that I received you at Vienna at a time when I had no reason to oblige you, as you were quite unknown to me. You were ill when you came to me, and I cured you ; when you left you were uncertain as to your future, and I procured you the pension you received. Two years later, as you were without any occupation, you applied to me, and I have given you an excellent post with a good opportunity to become known. You afterwards brought us the ratification by England of the treaty of peace, and that journey was paid for, as the journey to St. Petersburg would also have been, and His Majesty rewarded you as though you had been through ten campaigns. If you are discontented with your rewards, I must own that I should be unable to employ you farther, for I should not have the means to recompense you for your services. But I prefer to believe that you will feel the truth of what I say, and that in future you will have more confidence in my good will towards you than in your own ill-founded complaints."

De Praslin winds up a long and very well written letter by reminding the Chevalier that his predecessor in the office of Plenipotentiary had not run into extraordinary expenses, and that it was highly

improper to draw money which ought to belong to his successor.

Hoping that he will be more circumspect in the future, and more careful not to touch other people's money, the Duc remains, etc. etc.[1]

D'Éon did not take reproof in a humble and contrite spirit. On the contrary, he replies :

" As soon as I learned that it was decided to give me the title of Minister Plenipotentiary against my will, I had the honour to write to the Duc de Nivernais that I looked upon that title more as a misfortune than a benefit, for in all cases we must look to the end.

" I left Tonnerre, my native place, when I was quite young. I had some property there, and a house which was quite six times as large as that occupied by the Duc de Nivernais at London. In 1756, I left the Hôtel d'Ons-en-Bray, Rue de Bourbon, Faubourg St. Germain. I am a friend of the proprietor of that house, and I left, contrary to his wishes, in order to make three journeys to Russia and other Courts in Europe, to join the army, to come to England to carry four or five treaties to Versailles, not as a courier but as a diplomatist, who has contributed to make the said treaties. I often had to make these journeys when I was extremely ill, and once when I had a broken leg. In spite of all that, I am—if destiny so ordains it—ready to return to my starting-point, where I shall

[1] Duc de Praslin to d'Éon, 13th September, 1763.

again find my former happiness. The stages which I have passed through are those of a gentleman, soldier, and secretary to an embassy ; stages which combined lead naturally to becoming Minister in foreign Courts. The first gives a title, the second gives the firmness of character which the position demands, but the third is the school. . . .

" If a Marquis had done half the things which I have done during the last ten years, he would demand the rank of Duke or Marshal. For my own part, I am more modest in my pretensions, and I seek to be nothing here—not even Secretary to the Embassy."[1]

Obviously quite unaware that he is acting like a big baby, d'Éon writes the same day to Comte de Guerchy :

" I take the liberty of observing—relative to the position that fate has given me—that Solomon said long ago, ' time and chance happeneth to all ' in regard to happiness or misfortune, and I am more than ever convinced that Solomon was a very wise man. I will modestly add that the chance which could give the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary to a man who has been a successful diplomatist during ten years is not so blind as may be imagined ; what happened to me by chance might happen to another by good luck. . . .

" No man can measure himself, even in opinion,

[1] D'Éon to Duc de Praslin, 25th September, 1763. *Letters, Memoirs and Negotiations*, p. 40.

except by comparison with other men. There are many proverbs which prove the truth of this. It is commonly said, 'He is as stupid as a thousand men.' 'He is as wicked as four.' 'He is as stingy as ten.' It is the only scale that can be used, except in certain cases where men compare themselves with women. An ambassador may be equal to half a man, or a whole man, or twenty men, or ten thousand. It is needful to find the proportion existing between a Minister Plenipotentiary Captain of Dragoons, who has made ten political campaigns (without counting war campaigns, as the Duc de Praslin says) and an Ambassador Lieutenant-General who makes his first appearance. . . .

"I have already had the honour, Monsieur, to return you my sincere thanks for all your kind offers of services with regard to hopes to come. I have now to frankly confess that I am a second edition of 'Sister Anne' in 'Bluebeard,' who is always looking out and sees nothing coming; and that induces me to often hum to myself that pretty *refrain:*

'Phillis fair, I do despair
Although I always hope.'

"I have the honour to be, etc."[1]

The ill-feeling, which Duc de Praslin entertained towards d'Éon, was due to the fact that the Marquise de Pompadour had discovered the existence of the famous secret committee and the names of the

[1] D'Éon to Comte de Guerchy, 25th September, 1763. *Letters, Memoirs and Negotiations*, p. 74.

principal parties concerned therein. The downfall of the Chevalier would involve the disgrace of Comte de Broglie; but it was necessary for the favourite to get hold of the correspondence which d'Éon possessed, and at last she found, in the King's cabinet, some fragments of letters which were sufficient to compromise the Chevalier's career.

Crippled with debts, with no ready money, irritated by the accusations which came from Versailles, and, on the other hand, by no means inclined to return to the duties of Secretary to the Embassy, after having been temporary Ambassador, the Chevalier awaited de Guerchy with the fond hope that he might be drowned in crossing the Channel. He was not drowned, however, and arrived in London on 17th October. D'Éon went sulkily to pay him a visit. "He received me with hypocritical politeness," he writes, "and asked me in a wheedling way if I was sorry for the letter I wrote him on 25th September. 'No, sir, that letter,' I replied calmly, 'was but a reply—a little too violent, perhaps, but proper—to your attack of the 4th September, and if you wrote me such another letter, I should be obliged to give you a similar reply.' 'Come, come, I see you are a bit obstinate, my dear d'Éon,' and with that he pulled out of his pocket my order of recall,[1] duly signed, sealed, and de-

[1] The letter of Duc de Praslin ran as follows:

"VERSAILLES, *4th October*, 1763.

"As the arrival of the King's Ambassador will terminate the commission His Majesty gave you, with the title of Minister Plenipotentiary, I send herewith your letter of recall, which you will hand

livered, which he put into my hands with rather a contrite air, expressing his regret, and assuring me of his friendship and devotion. I only replied with a look . . . and saluting him coldly, I retired, taking with me the official notification of my disgrace."

D'Éon, deeply mortified, had not, however, lost all hope of seeing fortune once more smile on him. But as a matter of fact, the King had completely thrown him over, but was very anxious to regain possession of the secret papers, as the two following notes, addressed to Tercier will show.

"D'Éon has written several very singular letters; apparently his position as Minister Plenipotentiary has turned his head. Consequently Duc de Praslin suggests that he should come over here that we may see how matters stand. Take care that, if he is mad, he does not reveal any secrets."

. . . . . .

"You will see by my letter of yesterday that I know of the recall of Chevalier d'Éon. You will see him on his arrival in Paris, and I authorize you to take all precautions in order that the secret may be well guarded."

When his bad temper had somewhat cooled down, d'Éon began to think of the best means of resisting

to His British Majesty, according to custom, as promptly as possible. You will find herewith a copy of that letter. You will leave London directly after your audience with the King, and you will return at once to Paris, where you will give me notice of your arrival, and you will await the orders that I shall send you without presenting yourself at Court."

the King's orders. He first of all remarked to de Guerchy that as he had been nominated by letters signed by the King, he could not be revoked except by similar letters; also that he was in no hurry to leave, and would await "further orders from the Court." The Ambassador tried to make him comprehend the consequences of his obstinacy.

In order to hasten the departure of the Chevalier, de Guerchy requested the Court of St. James to name an early date for the farewell audience. But when the day came d'Éon was not present, owing to fresh complications which we must explain.

In September, a certain M. Treyssac de Vergy, *avocat* of the Parliament of Bordeaux, came to England, called on d'Éon and told him he had been sent to replace him as Minister. The Chevalier naturally demanded to see his credentials, and as de Vergy could not produce any, he was bowed out, d'Éon considering him to be—what no doubt he was—an adventurer. Soon after the arrival of de Guerchy, d'Éon again met de Vergy at a reception given by the Ambassador. Thereupon the Chevalier flew into a great rage—he doubtless suspected collusion between them—and poured forth a volley of abuse.

The following day there was a dinner given by Lord Halifax, at which Lord Sandwich, de Guerchy, and d'Éon were present. The latter was still in a bad temper; he related the incident of the preceding day, declared that he was more than ever

determined not to give up his post, and wished to fight de Vergy in a duel.

The English Ministers tried to dissuade him, on the ground that he would create a public scandal, but he replied that before he was an Ambassador he was a dragoon. "Well," said Lord Halifax, "even if you were the Duke of Bedford, I should be obliged to have you arrested by the Guards." "I have not the honour to be the Duke of Bedford; I am Monsieur d'Éon, and I don't want any of your Guards." Furious because the others would not regard the matter from his point of view, he wanted to leave the house, and because his host would not permit this, his rage grew worse than ever, and he cried that no one should prevent him leaving; but finally the irascible Chevalier was induced to listen to reason, and gave his word of honour that he would not fight de Vergy without first consulting Lord Sandwich and Lord Halifax.[1]

According to d'Éon's account of this little farce, there was no need of a detachment of the Guards to prevent a duel, as one of the parties had no mind for fighting.

[1] The incident was related in the newspapers the following day in the veiled language employed by journalists in those days and, according to their account, a detachment of the Guards was really sent for. (Extract from *Daily Advertiser*, Friday 28th October, 1763:)

"On Wednesday evening, in the house of a great Lord at Westminster, there arose a quarrel between two distinguished persons who occupy high positions. As it was to be feared that this quarrel would have serious results, a detachment of the Guards was sent for in order to prevent these persons from proceeding to extreme measures." (From the Unpublished Papers of d'Éon.)

"The affair passed off without a blow being struck, though I was in a more critical position than he was. I had promised I would do nothing against him, and I could not foresee that the brave Vergy was a man to be frightened at the least thing. In fact, I had no sooner closed the door of the room, to keep him in till the Ambassador's people, for whom I had sent, should arrive, than he began to run up and down the room and cry out, 'Ah, sir, don't touch me! Don't touch me!' 'What,' I said, 'you come here in fighting costume, and you are afraid I shall touch you.' Some of the forcible expressions and oaths I employed, frightened him still more, and I saw by his pallor and movements that he thought of jumping out of the window. I said to him, 'If you *want* to go out of the window, I will shove you out; but I warn you that there is a ditch and also some spikes below.' This matter-of-fact statement sufficed to stop him.

"I then handed him a paper, and said, 'My friend, here is a document that you must sign in duplicate as soon as you have read it.' He scanned it so hurriedly, that when he handed it back, he asked for a delay of three weeks in order to get letters from Paris. 'My friend,' I said, 'if your mind was less troubled, you would see that I give you a whole month.' I took him by the arm and made him enter my bedroom, where my desk was. Immediately he began to cry out, 'Ah, sir, don't kill me!' I could not make out what he meant, until I saw that his eyes were fixed upon a Turkish

sabre, and the pistols that I brought back from Germany. I understood then that the exclamation was due to excessive fright. To reassure him I took one of the pistols, placed it on the ground, and putting my foot on it, for fear it should bite him, I said, ' You see that I do not intend to hurt you, or even to come near you—so sign with a good grace.' So he signed the document in duplicate, and it seems needful to say that he did so with his hat under his arm and one knee on the ground. He did not wait to make a copy, although I proposed he should do so ; he was in too much of a hurry to get outside the door."

When he left d'Éon, de Vergy went before a magistrate to take out a summons, which he duly procured, but d'Éon never answered it.

The next crotchet of the Chevalier was to take it into his head that the Ambassador wanted to poison him, in order to get hold of his secret papers. On 28th October, he dined at the Embassy, and he believed that Comte de Guerchy had, through his butler, Chazal, put a strong dose of opium into his (the Chevalier's) wine, which " greatly incommoded him." This was, perhaps, not so improbable as it would appear. In a fragment of a letter from de Guerchy to Louis XV he says, " Whatever means I have employed to gain possession of the Chevalier's papers." (Report to Louis XV, dated 6th December, 1763.)

And in another place: " It was not possible for me

to take him either by force or cunning, because he does not live in my house, and has not come there since he carried things so far as he has."

To be ready for any event, the Chevalier called together three of his most faithful friends to consult as to whether it would not be better for him to change his lodgings.

This council of three, after due deliberation, resolved that next morning all the furniture and effects should be removed on a truck in one or two journeys. All was ready for an obstinate defence, and the garrison was determined in case it had to capitulate, to come out with drums beating, colours flying, and all the honours of war—*et operibus eorum cognoscetis eos.*

D'Éon installed himself in the house of Carrelet de la Rozière, which was transformed into a fortress. Surprised at this departure or perhaps feigning to be surprised, the Ambassador complained of the Chevalier's conduct, and wound up by demanding his accounts; to which d'Éon replied:

"If I have any accounts to render, I will render them to the Court of Versailles when they are asked for. The Minister Plenipotentiary of France lived at the expense of the King; precisely as the Ambassador now lives. Moreover, I am delighted that you furnish me with the opportunity to declare that I have never been your steward; I was neither born nor made for that."

Meanwhile d'Éon had convinced de la Rozière that his private papers were in danger, and the latter offered to convey them into France. A few days later, he started for Paris with the packet, and also letters from d'Éon for the King and de Broglie. Louis XV, fearing that his secret policy should be divulged to his Ministers, had hastily sent off a courier to Monsieur de Guerchy, informing him that he had signed a letter of extradition against d'Éon, and recommending the Ambassador to preserve all the papers he might find in d'Éon's lodgings, and which ought to be kept secret.

By the same courier, d'Éon received the following letter :

" FONTAINEBLEAU,
" *4th November*, 1763.

" I warn you that a demand for the extradition of your person, and signed by my hand, has been forwarded to-day to Guerchy to be transmitted to the Ministers of His Britannic Majesty, and the said demand is accompanied by an *exempt* (a police official) if violent measures are necessary. If you cannot save yourself, at least save your papers, and place no confidence in Sieur Manin, the secretary of de Guerchy : he will betray you.

" (Signed) LOUIS."

But the British Government refused to extradite the Chevalier, as that would be contrary to the British Constitution. Gaillardet sees in this decision the influence of Sophia Charlotte, who by her

marriage with George III, had now become Queen of England, but still remembered her old lover. At any rate, though d'Éon could not be extradited, he received an intimation that he was not to show himself again at Court.

This therefore ended d'Éon's diplomatic career. The contest against the Ambassador continued, and his refusal to hand over the papers concerning the secret mission decided de Guerchy to draw up a legal document in which the Chevalier maintained his refusal, and which d'Éon consented to sign.

The friends of the Chevalier all deserted him, and even his mother, frightened at what might be the results of her son's folly, wanted to come to London to supplicate him to obey the orders of the King. She gave up the idea after she received the following letter from her son :

" I have received, my dear mother, all the lamentable and pitiful letters that you have taken the trouble to write me. Why do you weep, oh, woman of little faith, as it says in the Bible ? What is there in common between your affairs at Tonnerre and political affairs in London ? Plant your cabbages in peace, weed your garden, eat the fruits of your orchard, drink the milk of your cows, and the wine of your vineyard, and leave me alone without your stupid sermons, about Paris and Versailles ; and your tears, which only worry me without consoling one. But I am in no need of consolation, for I am in no wise sad, and my heart plays the violin and

even the bass viol, as I have already written you, seeing that I do my duty, and my adversaries, who call themselves great lords and Viscounts de Marmion, do not do theirs. I am not afraid of the thunderbolts of these petty Jupiters, either when they are near, or when they are far. That is all I can tell you. Rest quiet, as I do, and if you do come to London, I shall be delighted, because I can confide to you the despatches I have received from the Court, and the accounts of Comte de Guerchy, Vicomte de Marmion, and which he assuredly would not get, if he came with flags flying, matches lighted, guns charged, and drums beating. He shall not have even so much as the envelopes of the letters that I swear by all the gods, unless he brings me an order from the King, my master and his, in due form, and that he cannot do up to the present.

"I conclude by telling you that the best thing for you to do is to live quietly in your charming solitude in the outskirts of Tonnerre, and not to go to Paris, unless the Court will pay your expenses at a better rate than they did mine. Remember, that if men or women praise you or blame you, that does not make you either better or worse. The praise of the virtuous is in their own conscience, and not in the mouths of men."[1]

The King had now totally abandoned d'Éon, and was only concerned that his papers should be saved. The enemies of the Chevalier had him proclaimed a

[1] D'Éon to his Mother, 30th December, 1763. From d'Éon's Unpublished Papers.

traitor and a rebel ; but if his enemies were numerous and his friends scarce, there were still some women who did not desert *le beau Chevalier*. The Comtesse de Rochefort writes to him as follows :

" Paris,
" *5th December*, 1763.

" Console yourself, poor condemned one : every one has not deserted you. There is still a heart which will always remain yours, and that heart is mine. Monsieur de Nivernais says you are in the wrong ; don't be angry with him, he is the friend of Duc de Praslin and Comte de Guerchy, and has been their friend since he was a child ; and friendship is the sister of love, and like her brother, is blindfolded.

" That is why, dear boy, I shall always be doubly blind to your faults—I who love you with both friendship and love. I have given you my eyes, and see only with yours. Could I ever think you were in the wrong ? Moreover, if you were guilty, I should fly to you only the more readily. . . .

" You must be terribly bored in England. To amuse you, I will become your correspondent. I will tell you all the news of your own country, and will try to make you forget that you are no longer here.

" This is my first bulletin, the second will follow soon.

" Adieu, my friend, love me, and think of me,

" Marie
" Comtesse de Rochefort."

D'Éon also had a place in the affection of Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg, now become Queen of England, though, of course, she did not display it so openly as the Comtesse de Rochefort did.

Matters continued to turn out worse and worse for d'Éon, and the antagonism between him and the Ambassador became more and more acute. As de Guerchy could not officially get at d'Éon, he libelled him in print, and published an account of the incident that took place at the English Minister's house. The Chevalier did not deign to reply. De Vergy, who had joined the party of the Ambassador, printed a pamphlet in which d'Éon was brutally attacked. This time, d'Éon did reply, but with moderation, and to which de Guerchy made a counter rejoinder. Very soon there was a whole deluge of pamphlets—anonymous for the most part —some of them in favour of d'Éon, others for the Ambassador. Amongst those, who took part in this wordy war, were Vergy, who was employed at the Embassy, Sieur Lescallier, a Mademoiselle Bac de Saint Armand, and a London magistrate, "Chevalier Fielding."[1]

Having come to the end of his resources, d'Éon wrote to the Duc de Choiseul asking permission to join the English military or civil service.

Not having received any reply to this communication, d'Éon, as a last resource, brought out on 22nd March, 1764, a volume in which all his disputes

[1] This could not have been the great novelist, Henry Fielding, as he died in 1754.

with the Ambassador were reproduced.[1] The second part of the book contained the letters to and from de Guerchy. The third part consisted of extracts from a correspondence between Duc de Praslin and Duc de Nivernais, in which both frankly expressed their opinion of de Guerchy.

This publication created a great scandal in England, and caused d'Éon to lose the last of his remaining friends. The Privy Council met, and by the advice of Lord Mansfield, and at the request of de Guerchy —in which the whole *Corps diplomatique* joined— the Attorney-General instituted an action for libel against d'Éon.

At Paris, the book fell like a bombshell, and the Chevalier's conduct was blamed most severely. Bachaumont in his journal says :

"*14th April.*

"The book of Monsieur d'Éon de Beaumont has made a great sensation here. It contains letters attributed to Messieurs de Praslin, de Nivernais, and de Guerchy, with notes by the mendacious editor. They do not give an exalted idea of the talent, wit, or political honesty of the person who wrote them.

[1] *Letters, Memoirs and Private Negotiations of Chevalier d'Éon.* Minister Plenipotentiary of France to the King of Great Britain, Printed and published by the Author at the expense of the Corps Diplomatique, London, 1764. Two editions in quarto. On the title page were three lines from Voltaire :

"Pardon me, a soldier is a bad courtier.
Nurtured in Scythia and the plains of Arbažan
I can serve the Court, but know nothing of it."

And lower down :

"*Vita sine literis Mors est.*"

The book is preceded by a preface in which Monsieur d'Éon explains the motives which obliged him to publish these letters. The infamy of his behaviour, the incongruity of his conduct, and his literary style prove him to be either bad or mad."

On 26th April, he again alludes to the book :

" An action has been commenced against Monsieur d'Éon, about whom there is so much talk nowadays, as the author of a most scandalous libel and most atrocious calumnies. Duc de Praslin gave orders for all copies of the book to be destroyed."

Louis XV was still apprehensive about his secret papers, and requested Duc de Praslin to enter into negotiations with the Chevalier who, on his part, had the boldness to threaten to sell the documents.

" I will never be the first to desert either my King or my country," he writes to Tercier, " but if by misfortune the King and country think fit to sacrifice me, I will vindicate myself in the eyes of all Europe, and that will be very easy as you must feel. I will not conceal from you that the enemies of France, thinking to profit by my cruel position, have made offers to me to enter into their service. The advantages that they can offer do not affect me, and honour alone determined my conduct. I replied to these offers as I ought. The leaders of the opposition have offered me as much money as I like, provided I would hand them my papers and despatches in a sealed packet, with a promise to

return them to me in the same condition when I returned the money. I open my heart to you, and you will feel and know how repugnant to my character such an expedient would be. . . . But if I am totally deserted, and if between now and 22nd April (Easter Day) I do not receive a promise, signed by the King or Comte de Broglie, that all the evil wrought against me by Monsieur de Guerchy shall be repaired, . . . then, Monsieur, I formally and assuredly declare that all hope will be lost for me, and I shall be forced to clear my character in the eyes of the King of England, his Ministers, and the Houses of Lords and Commons. You must then prepare for a war, of which I shall be the innocent author. That war will be inevitable; the King of England will be forced into it by the voice of the nation, and the leaders of the Opposition."

By the advice of Comte de Broglie, who was once more in the royal favour, Madame de Pompadour having died, the King sent to Comte de Guerchy, Monsieur de Nort, who was well known to d'Éon, with orders to appease his wrath and learn his demands. D'Éon joyfully received the negotiator, and wrote to Louis vows of loyalty.

But it soon became clear in the course of the conferences that if the Chevalier would obtain pecuniary recompense for his alleged wrongs, he would receive no compensation for his wounded pride.

This rendered him more intractable than ever, and after a vain attempt to overcome the obstinacy

of de Guerchy and the pig-headedness of d'Éon, de Nort had to pack up his traps and return to France.

Then an attempt at a forcible abduction was made. At the request of the Ambassador, a sailing vessel, with a crew of twenty-one men, anchored at Gravesend, and a boat with six rowers hovered between London and Westminster bridges, ready to receive the Chevalier—when they caught him. They did not catch him, for some "waterside character" informed d'Éon of the plot, and he took the necessary precautions to prevent being kidnapped.

We have already stated that d'Éon was charged with libel for his pamphlet against de Guerchy. The day of trial arrived, and as the Chevalier did not appear, he was found guilty. It is not stated what the sentence was, but that is of small consequence, as it was never carried into effect. Officers of the Court were indeed sent to arrest him, but they found he had left his lodgings, and ascertained that he was living with his cousin, d'Éon de Mouloize. The house of the last named was also searched, doors and cupboards were broken, but the Chevalier was not to be found, the only persons found on the premises were the cousin, d'Éon de Mouloize and the ladies with whom he was talking. One of these ladies was Mrs. Eldoves, his landlady; the other "lady" was the Chevalier d'Éon disguised as a woman.

Prudence compelled d'Éon to "lie doggo" for

some time, and when he did emerge from his seclusion, it was to bring a charge of "attempted murder" against de Guerchy. In this he was aided by his former enemy, Tresac de Vergy, who, not being satisfied with the treatment he had received at the Embassy, had turned traitor and now gave evidence in the Chevalier's favour. De Guerchy protested vigorously, and called on Paris to defend him, but in spite of his efforts, the Grand Jury brought in a true bill and found that he "not having the fear of God before his eyes" had encouraged Henri Tressac de Vergy to assassinate the said d'Éon de Beaumont "in contempt of Our Sovereign Lord and his laws."

This verdict caused general consternation in official circles. De Guerchy expected to be arrested; Chazal, who was accused of having mixed the poison, fled the country, as also did one of the Secretaries of the Embassy. D'Éon was exultant. The Ministers moved the case into the Court of King's Bench, where the judges decreed that "the question was in suspense." The mob took the Chevalier's side, and the Ambassador was pelted with stones.

The Court of Versailles came to the conclusion that evidently de Guerchy was not a *persona grata* in England, and he was recalled a few months later, and replaced by Monsieur Durand, one of the faithful agents of the secret policy.

D'Éon tried to renew relations with de Broglie who, having won the victory, could afford to be indulgent. He and de Tercier between them pre-

vailed on Louis XV to grant the Chevalier a pension, but it was given grudgingly, or "with the tips of the fingers," as the French say, and the Chevalier was sharp enough to perceive that he had mortally offended the King.

His adventure had taught him prudence, and he preferred to remain in England and enjoy liberty.

CHAPTER IX

(1766–1777)

A political spy—First doubts as to his real sex—Wagers—Feminism—The French Court avows that d'Éon is a woman—He renders a service to Madame du Barry—Meets Beaumarchais—Takes a rest—Death of Louis XV—Louis XVI makes a proposal—Beaumarchais sent as an Ambassador to "la Chevalière"—Business transactions—An idyll—Disagreement and hostilities—Letter to Comte de Vergennes.

IT must not be forgotten that d'Éon had originally been sent to England to study the possibilities of a French invasion. He was still in possession of all the plans and letters relating to this scheme, and as he would not give them up, and could not be compelled to, he still had a sort of half-recognized official status; and the information he supplied was duly appreciated at Versailles.

"In reality," writes Duc de Broglie in his book, *The King's Secret*, "d'Éon was the pioneer, if not the founder of that system of secret intelligence which is now practised by all the Governments of Europe."

He played this rôle for fully seven years, and played it so well that he was half forgiven by the French Court, and the reconciliation would have

been more complete if his pension had been paid regularly. Once when he was particularly hard up, he asked permission to go to Poland, where Stanislas Ponialowski, the favourite of Catherine II, and whom he had known in Russia, had just been proclaimed King. Duc de Broglie replied that it was the King's wish that he should remain in London.

About this time, rumours became current in London that the Chevalier was a woman in disguise. In his wordy war with the Ambassador, d'Éon had employed any weapon that came handy, and de Guerchy defended himself in much the same manner. In one of the pamphlets issued by the Ambassador's party, the writer, for want of any better argument, threw doubts on the Chevalier's sex, and declared that he was not a man.[1] It must be admitted that

[1] Gaillardet has invented the following dramatic story: The Queen sent a note to the Chevalier, requesting him to meet her at the Palace of St. James at eleven o'clock one evening in January. D'Éon was, of course, punctual at the rendezvous at the time appointed, the Queen also, but the lovers had hardly met when they were surprised by George III. The King, very naturally, asked d'Éon what he was doing there at such a late hour. D'Éon replied that he was a doctor; the Queen had sent for him in order to consult him, and had purposely fixed on a late hour so as not to excite the professional jealousy of the physician-in-ordinary, who resided in the Palace. The story must have appeared pretty thin, and after the Chevalier's departure, George III had a "scene" with Sophia Charlotte. She replied that d'Éon was a woman, and related the story of their meeting at Strelitz. George, not altogether satisfied, wrote to Versailles to ask the truth about d'Éon's sex. But the Queen had already written to Louis, informing him of the facts of the case, and imploring him to save her reputation. Louis therefore thought he was doing a good action in assuring George that d'Éon was a woman; he also wrote to the Chevalier telling him to keep up the illusion—which he did.

the Chevalier's personal appearance lent some colour to the supposition, owing to the delicacy of his figure and features, and his beardless cheeks and chin. Some declared that rich and pretty women had been proposed to him in marriage, but he had always declined to meet any eligible young woman, and had taken an early opportunity to escape from any place in which he was likely to encounter a match-maker.

The new French Ambassador, Monsieur du Chatelet, was "persuaded that d'Éon was a woman," and wrote and informed the King of the rumours which were current in London. On the other hand, Princess Daschkow, the niece of the Russian Chancellor Woronzow, who had been exiled from Russia by order of Catherine II, told everybody she met that she had long known the Chevalier d'Éon, that he had gained admittance to the palace, disguised as a woman, and had deceived the Empress Elizabeth, who had admitted him to a place amongst her Maids of Honour.

In a few weeks' time, all London was making bets about the Chevalier's sex. At Brooks's and White's Clubs, some thousands of guineas had been staked,[1] and the "market price" of the odds was posted up at several clubs and coffee-houses.

In due time these rumours reached Paris: on September 25th, 1771, Bachaumont writes:

"For some months past, rumours have been

[1] From a MS. in the British Museum.

current that that impetuous person, the Chevalier d'Éon, so notorious for his curious pranks, is nothing else than a woman dressed up as a man. In England, they are so confident of the truth of this report, that bets to the amount of more than a hundred thousand guineas have been made about it, and this has once more drawn the attention of Paris to this singular man."

And as in France everything begins or finishes with a song, verses, poems and madrigals were made about this supposed woman. Here is an example taken from the *Almanach des Muses* of 1771 :

TO MADEMOISELLE
(WHO WAS DISGUISED AS A MAN)

Good day ! you rascal Cavalier.
You know so well your charms—and luck—
That even dames the most severe
Are by your grace and manners struck.
Prudes drop their pharisaical
Pretence when you appear ;
And school-girls lackadaisical
Your voice with pleasure hear.
But though your looks might them seduce
(They're what a woman heeds most)
You're really not the slightest use
For what a woman needs most.
Then cease to play a bogus part
That's far above your sex's powers,
And be as once thou wert—and art—
The torment and delight of ours.
Renounce this senseless masquerade,
And, when in woman's garb attired.
Enjoy the conquests you have made,
For you were born to be admired.

D'Éon, for his part, made no attempt to elucidate the mystery—a mystery of a sort that appeals to women even more than to men—and as a consequence of which, he received numerous letters from old and young women, couched in terms similar to the one given below :

" Miss Wilkes presents her respects to the Chevalier d'Éon, and would greatly like to know if he is truly a woman, as many people inform her, or really a man. Miss Wilkes begs with all heart that the Chevalier will be kind enough to tell her the truth. It would be still more kind of him to come and dine with her and her papa to-day, or to-morrow, or as soon as he can."

The Chevalier found himself becoming more and more celebrated ; songs were made about him, caricatures were published, and bets were more numerous than ever.

Infuriated beyond measure by these reports, d'Éon publicly caned a well-known banker, and assaulted two noble lords who had made a bet about his sex. But there were many other bettors ; and having been informed that some of them proposed to settle their bets by seizing and stripping him, he left London secretly, and took refuge with his friend, Lord Ferrers.

In a letter to Comte de Broglie, informing him of his departure, he says :

" I am much mortified to be still as nature made me. Being of a calm and equable character, I have

never been addicted to pleasure, and therefore my friends in France, in Russia, and in England, have innocently supposed that I was of the feminine gender, and the malice of my enemies has grossly exaggerated these suspicions."

Whilst he was travelling in Scotland, he learned from the newspapers that he was accused of having touched some of the money of the bets that were made about him. He at once returned to London, and applied to the Lord Mayor for a summons against the person or persons who had issued the libel.

The Public Advertiser published the text of a protest which the Chevalier sent to Comte de Broglie.

"It is not my fault that betting on every conceivable subject is a national disease of the English. I have proved to them, and will prove again as often as they like, with sword in hand, that I am not only a man, but a Captain of Dragoons."[1]

[1] According to Gaillardet, the protests of d'Éon as to his sex soon reached the English Court, and reawakened the suspicions of the King as to the relations of the Queen and the Chevalier. If he were a man, the Queen had evidently lied in order to conceal her crime. She appears to have once more applied to Louis XV to help her out of the difficulty. In a letter which he wrote to the Duc d'Aiguillon, on 18th October, 1771, the Chevalier complains of the dilemma in which he is placed :

"Monsieur le Duc," he writes, "since the tranquillity of my country and that of an august person demand it, I consent to allow myself to pass for a woman, and I promise not to give any living soul any proof to the contrary. But what I cannot consent to is to wear the clothes of a sex that is not mine. I did indeed wear them

This was one of the last disavowals of the Chevalier, for he began to perceive that this dubiety as to his sex might perhaps turn to his advantage. For some time, he still hesitated to officially acknowledge that he was of the opposite sex; but to his friend, Drouet, who passed through London, and who "chaffed" him on the subject, he declared that he was a woman; adding, that his parents, who desired a man child, had compelled him to assume the disguise; and as Drouet still appeared incredulous, d'Éon gave him "formal proofs" of the truth of his statement.

It is not easy to understand in what these "formal proofs" consisted. The post-mortem examination proved conclusively that d'Éon was a man; but from what we know of his character, his continence towards women, and his feminine appearance, we may suppose that his physical development was not normal. No doubt he was an example of one of the many forms of female hermaphroditism.

for a time in my youth, but that was in obedience to my King, and only for a short period. To assume such a disguise now for the rest of my life, or even temporarily would be more than I could bear. The very idea of it appals me to such a degree that nothing could overcome my repugnance. I will preserve silence as to my sex; I will not deny it. I will even pretend, if it needs must be, that I am of the feminine gender. That is all that it is in my power to do, and all that can humanly be demanded of my devotion. To require more would be tyranny and cruelty, and I could not submit to it.

"I beg of you, Monsieur le Duc, to apprise His Majesty of my resolve, and believe me to remain your most humble, etc. etc.

"CHEVALIER D'ÉON."

It was therefore to save the honour of Sophia Charlotte that the Chevalier consented to obey the orders of Louis XV.

Dr. Brouardel has observed the characteristic traits of feminism in a young man, and has described them as follows :

" If we examine him physically, we shall notice that the body ceased to develop after the age of puberty, and that from that time the corporeal conformation has remained almost stationary. The skeleton does not assume the masculine form, the pelvis is enlarged, fat invades the subcutaneous tissues and swells out the mammary region. Generally towards the age of sixteen or eighteen, but sometimes earlier, these youths become obese, the body becomes more rounded, and sometimes they have quite a feminine appearance."

In this case, no doubt, the Chevalier exposed his breast to the view of Drouet, and he, not being an expert physiologist, was deceived into the belief that such a swelling bosom could not possibly belong to a man.

On his return to France, Drouet recounted his interview with our hero to Comte de Broglie, who wrote to the King :

" I must not, on this subject, forget to inform Your Majesty that the suspicions which have been raised regarding the sex of this extraordinary personage are well founded. The Sieur Drouet, whom I had instructed to do his best to verify these suspicions, has returned and has assured me that he has succeeded, and certifies . . . that the Sieur d'Éon is a woman, and nothing but a woman, and

has all the attributes of one. He begged the Sieur to keep the secret, very justly remarking that if it were made known his official rôle would be entirely finished. . . . May I therefore beg Your Majesty to permit that his confidence in his friend should not be betrayed, and that he has not to regret having trusted his friend with his secret."

This letter very much surprised the King, both as regards the Chevalier and Queen Sophia Charlotte.

Just at this time, d'Éon had the good, or bad, luck to render a signal service to Louis XV and Madame du Barry.

A certain Theveneau de Morande, an adventurer, who had taken refuge in London, published a journal entitled the *Gazetier Cuirassé*, which contained a profusion of calumnies and scandalous anecdotes concerning the Court of Versailles; and it was rumoured that the said Morande had the intention to bring out a book in which Madame du Barry and the King himself would be atrociously libelled. Comte de Broglie wrote to d'Éon to stop the scandal, and try to buy Morande's silence.

D'Éon undertook the matter, and at once set to work so skilfully and quickly that, no doubt, the affair would have been settled in a very short time, but Madame du Barry hated Comte de Broglie, and did not wish to be indebted to him for any services rendered, and she therefore persuaded Louis XV to take the business out of the hands of d'Éon, who was employed by de Broglie.

Madame du Barry sent a man named de Lormoy to make terms with Morande ; but instead of using the money with which he was entrusted to buy the silence of Morande, he dissipated it in riotous living. When he left London, he owed several thousand pounds, which d'Éon had afterwards to settle. Morande, cheated and disappointed, would have brought out the book, and made it more spiteful than ever, but was prevented by the appearance of a third ambassador. This was no less a person than Caron de Beaumarchais, who had been sent by M. de Sartine, the head of the Paris police.

D'Éon does not seem to have formed a very high opinion of the author of *The Barber of Seville*, but a man who thinks he is going to get a good job, and finds himself superseded, is not apt to be impartial. He writes :

" The Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais, blamed by the Parliament of Paris, and on the point of being arrested on a warrant, took refuge in the wardrobe of the King. In the darkness of that apartment, M. de Laborde confided to the Sieur de Beaumarchais, that the King's heart was sad, because a villainous libel had been composed at London by the scoundrel Morande, about the love affairs of the charming du Barry. At once the romantic and gigantic heart of Sieur Caron was filled with the most chimerical ideas ; his ambition mounted as high as the waves of the sea he was about to cross. . . . He informed Laborde of his intention to go to London and

secretly corrupt the corrupt Morande. The plan was communicated by Laborde to Louis XV, who deigned to approve of it. Consequently, the Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais arrived in London incognito, escorted by the Comte de Lauragais *in publico*."

The two new ambassadors had to avail themselves of the service of the Chevalier—at least so he says—before they could come to terms with Morande ; but finally the affair was settled, and the pamphleteer pocketed one hundred and fifty-four thousand *livres*.

In 1774, there was published at Amsterdam, *The Leisure Hours of the Chevalier d'Ėon de Beaumont*, in 13 vols., 8vo. It is said to have met with a great success in London and Berlin, but all he received from Paris was an intimation that he was never again to enter the city. This sentence of excommunication was not due to any objections to the contents of the book, but solely to the fact that it was dedicated to the Duc de Choiseul, who had recently been exiled.

Louis XV died 10th May, 1774, and naturally "the secret ministry" died with him. He was not regretted by the people, and most certainly not by his Ministers.

"I will content myself with telling you that it is time," D'Ėon writes to Comte de Broglie, "after the cruel loss of our advocate-general at Versailles, who in the midst of his own Court had less power than a lawyer at the Châtelet, and who by an incredible weakness, allowed his faithless servants to

triumph over his secret and faithful servants, and always did more good to his declared enemies than to his real frends ; it is time, I say, that you should instruct the new King, who loves the truth, and is said to have as much firmness of mind as his illustrious ancestor had little, that you should tell this young monarch that for more than twenty years you were the secret minister of Louis XV, and I was the under-minister, under his orders and yours.

" As for you, Monsieur le Comte, you can describe better than I can, by what jealousy, what perfidy, what baseness, and what deep-dyed vengeance of Duc d'Aiguillon, you are still in exile at Ruffec, without having ceased to be the friend and the secret minister of the late King to the time of his death.

" Never would posterity believe such facts if you and I had not all the documents to prove them, as well as some still more incredible. If that worthy King had not driven the Jesuits out of his kingdom, and if he had some Malagrida for a confessor, that would surprise nobody ; but, thank God, I hope that the new King will get us both out of the dilemma in which we are plunged. I hope that he will not have any Jesuits, either for confessor, or friend, or minister, either in the garb of a priest, or chancellor, or 'duke and peer,' or courtier, or courtesan."

Comte de Broglie replied to this letter by informing the Chevalier that he would let the King know

what services d'Éon had rendered, and what were the royal intentions concerning him.

Louis XVI would have no secret policy, but he felt bound to see that the secret agents of his grandfather did not starve, and also he wished to get hold of any compromising papers they might possess. Comte de Vergennes knew the importance of the papers held by the Chevalier, and he wrote to Louis XVI on the subject on 22nd August, 1774.

"Monsieur de Muy has seen the whole of the correspondence which passed between Comte de Broglie and Sieur d'Éon since the latter was forbidden to return to France. We are now working at a report which we shall have the honour to submit to your Majesty concerning the best means to recall a man whom it would be inconvenient to allow to remain in England."

A result of this letter was that the Marquis de Prunevaux, Captain in the Burgundy Cavalry regiment, was sent to d'Éon with a safe-conduct for the Chevalier's return to France. The pension which had been granted by Louis XV was also guaranteed to him. In return, he was to hand over all the secret papers, and to abstain from all further attacks on the Guerchy family. D'Éon was about to accept the proposed terms, when—as usual—an unforeseen event put a stop to the negotiations. Tressac de Vergy died suddenly, and in his will, mentioned the attempts of de Guerchy to murder the Chevalier. D'Éon was convinced that he had been deeply

wronged, and he somewhat illogically refused to entertain the offers made to him by the Minister. De Prunevaux returned to France, bearing a letter in which d'Éon fixed his own conditions. He demanded to be restored to all his former offices and political titles ; the payment of all expenses during the time of his suspension, and various other sums, amounting in all to 250,000 francs.

De Prunevaux not having succeeded in getting these secret papers, another emissary was sent in the person of de Pomereux, a Captain of Grenadiers. He, being convinced in his own mind that the Chevalier was really a woman, opened the campaign with an offer of his heart and hand ! But his offers, both business and amatory, were rejected, and he went back to Versailles unsuccessful in both suits.

Louis XVI was of opinion that time and poverty would reduce the Chevalier to a more humble frame of mind, so he stopped the pension of 12,000 francs a year that had been granted by Louis XV. D'Éon was therefore left in England without any resources. His creditors began to worry him, and he finally was obliged to pawn the celebrated papers to his friend, Lord Ferrers, who sent him 100,000 francs.

Beaumarchais chanced to be in London in May, 1775, and d'Éon harassed by eternal want of pence, approached him (Morande acting as intermediary) and begged him to intercede with the Court of Versailles for the Chevalier's pardon. He confided to Beaumarchais that he was really a woman, and played the part so well that the author of *The Barber*

of Seville believed him, and on his return to France wrote to the King :

" When one thinks that this deeply persecuted creature belongs to a sex to which we pardon all things, the heart is moved with a gentle pity. . . . I dare to assure you, Sire, that if this astonishing creature is treated with skill and tenderness, although she has been embittered by twelve years of misfortunes, she will easily be brought into subjection."

Beaumarchais spoke to Comte de Vergennes about reopening negotiations with d'Éon. He obtained permission to make a fresh attempt, but he soon found that there were many and serious obstacles in the way. Firstly, there was the question of the indemnity, and then the farewell audience with the King, which the Chevalier's change of sex had rendered impossible. But Beaumarchais had patience as well as skill, and with some trouble won a first success. He writes to Comte de Vergennes, on 14th July, 1775 :

" However that may be, I think I have cut off one of the heads of the English hydra. I hold at your orders, Captain d'Éon, a brave officer, a great politician, and filled from head to feet with the most virile qualities of a man. He brings the King the keys of an iron box that is sealed with my seal, and which contains all the papers that the King desires to repossess."

One important point had been gained; but in order to avoid a fresh scandal, it was needful that the Chevalier should make a "public avowal" of his sex, and undertake that he would thenceforth wear the garb of a woman.

On 7th October, 1775, Beaumarchais was able to announce his victory.

"Written promises to be prudent do not suffice in the case of a person who catches fire at the very name of de Guerchy; a positive declaration as to his sex, and an undertaking to live henceforth in the garb of a woman is the only check that can prevent rumours and misfortunes. I insisted boldly on these points, and they have been granted."

The agreement being therefore definitive, Beaumarchais received the official title of ambassador to "la Chevalière" d'Éon, with full powers from the King; and he proceeded to draw up, in his finest style and his best handwriting, a highly original document, a copy of which is appended:

"We, the undersigned, Pierre August Caron de Beaumarchais, specially charged with private orders from the King of France, dated at Versailles, 25th August, 1775, communicated to Chevalier d'Éon at London, and of which a copy, certified by me will be annexed to the present deed, on the one part;

"AND Demoiselle Charles Geneviève Louise Auguste Andrée Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont, adult spinster, known hitherto under the name of

Chevalier d'Éon, squire, formerly Captain of Dragoons, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis, *aide-de-camp* to Marshal, Duke and Count de Broglie, Minister Plenipotentiary of France to the King of Great Britain, formerly Doctor of Civil and Canon Law, Advocate to the Parliament of Paris, Royal Censor for History and *belles-lettres*, sent to Russia with the Chevalier Douglas to establish the reunion of the two Nations, Secretary of the Embassy of Marquis de l'Hôpital, Plenipotentiary Ambassador of France to the Imperial Majesty of All the Russias, and Secretary of the Embassy of Duc de Nivernais, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France in England for the conclusion of the last peace, there has been agreed and subscribed unto, as follows :

"*First Article.* That I, Caron de Beaumarchais, demand in the name of the King, that all documents, public or secret, connected with all the various political negotiations in England with which the Chevalier d'Éon has been charged, and notably those concerning the Peace of 1763, correspondence, minutes, copies of letters, cipher, etc., now deposited with Lord Ferrers, Count, Peer, and Admiral in the English Navy (in Upper Seymour Street, Portman Square, London) who has always been the staunch friend of the said Chevalier d'Éon during all his misfortunes and trials in England, the said papers being enclosed in a large iron box of which I have the key, shall be restored to me, after being initialled

by me and the aforesaid Chevalier d'Éon, and the inventory of which shall be attached to the present deed to prove the exactness of the complete surrender of the aforesaid papers.

"*Second Article.* That all the papers of the secret correspondence between the Chevalier d'Éon and the late King, and the various persons charged by His Majesty to continue and maintain the correspondence and who are there designated under various names, the person of the said Majesty being therein designated the 'Avocat,' etc. . . . which aforesaid secret correspondence was hidden under the flooring of the bedroom of the said Chevalier d'Éon from whence it was taken by me the 3rd October of the present year, in my presence only, and is at present sealed up and addressed 'To the King only, at Versailles,' upon each cardboard cover or quarto volume. That all the copies of the said letters, minutes, ciphers, etc. . . . shall be handed to me with the same precautions as regards initialling and an exact inventory, the said secret correspondence consisting of five large packets in cardboard covers or thick quarto volumes.

"*Third Article.* That the said Chevalier d'Éon desists from all kinds of legal or personal proceedings against the memory of the late Comte de Guerchy, his adversary, the successors of his name, the persons of his family . . . and engages never to revive such proceedings under any form whatever, unless he sees himself compelled thereto by the legal or personal

provocation of some relative, friend, or adherent of the said family, which is not to be feared at present, the wisdom of His Majesty having moreover sufficiently provided against the renewal of these scandalous quarrels on either side in the future.

"*Fourth Article.* And that an insurmountable barrier should be placed between the adversaries and prevent any personal quarrel from ever arising on either side, I insist, in the name of His Majesty, that the disguise which has hitherto concealed the person of a woman under the appearance of the Chevalier d'Éon shall cease entirely; And without seeking to blame Charles Geneviève Louise Auguste Andrée Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont for a concealment of sex and condition which is entirely due to the fault of his parents, and even rendering justice to the prudent, honest and reserved, although manly and vigorous, conduct which he has always shown under his adopted habits. I absolutely insist that the ambiguity of sex which has hitherto been an inexhaustible subject of indecent wagers and objectionable jokes, which might be renewed, especially in France, and that his intrepid character would not suffer, and would lead to new quarrels which perhaps would but serve as a pretext to conceal and revive the old ones, I absolutely insist, I say, in the name of the King, that the phantom of the Chevalier d'Éon should disappear for ever, and that a clear and unequivocal public declaration of the real sex of Charles Geneviève Louise Auguste

Andrée Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont should be made before her arrival in France, and that the resumption of a woman's garb should definitely settle public opinion in regard to her, and this she can the less refuse at present[1] now that she will appear the more interesting in the eyes of both sexes, which her life, her courage, and her talents have equally honoured. On which conditions, I will hand her the safe-conduct on parchment signed by the King and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, which will permit her to return to France and remain there under the special and immediate safeguard of His Majesty, who will grant her not only protection and safety under his royal promise, but who has had the kindness to change the annual pension of twelve thousand francs, granted by the late King in 1766, and which has been regularly paid unto the present time, into a life annuity of the same sum, with an acknowledgment that the funds for the said agreement have been furnished and advanced by the said Chevalier for the affairs of the late King, as well as large sums of money, the total amount of which will be handed to her by me for the payment of her debts in England, together with a copy in due form, on parchment, of the contract of the payment of the said annuity of twelve thousand francs, dated 28th September, 1775.

"And I, Charles Geneviève Louise Auguste

[1] "As her sex has been proved by witnesses, physician, surgeon, matron, and trustworthy documents." (Marginal note added by the Chevalier, but afterwards struck out by Beaumarchais.)

Andrée Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont, adult spinster, known hitherto by the name of Chevalier d'Éon and by the titles above stated, submit to all the conditions imposed in the name of the King, solely to give His Majesty the greatest possible proofs of my respect and submission, although it would have been more agreeable to me if he had deigned to employ me again in the Army or Diplomatic Service, in accordance with my earnest entreaties and the seniority of my rank. And as, with the exception of some irritability, that a legitimate and natural defence and a most just resentment rendered in some sort excusable (I pray) His Majesty to acknowledge that I have always behaved as a brave man as an officer, and a hardworking, intelligent and discreet subject as a political agent. I agree to publicly declare my sex without any ambiguity or equivocation, and to wear until my death the dress of a woman,[1] unless His Majesty shall permit me to resume the apparel of a man. If I find it impossible to bear the discomfort of wearing woman's clothes, after having tried to accustom myself thereunto, I desire to retire for some months, after returning to France, to the convent of the Bernardines of St. Antoine des Champs, or to some other convent that I may choose.

"I promise to desist from all legal or personal action against the memory of the late Comte de

[1] "Which I have worn on several occasions known to Your Majesty." (Struck out by Beaumarchais.)

Guerchy and his representatives, unless compelled thereto by some provocation as stated above.

"I give my word of Honour that I will hand over to Monsieur Caron de Beaumarchais all public and private papers connected with the Embassy, and the secret correspondence mentioned above, without reserving or retaining a single one, on the following conditions, to which I beg Your Majesty to subscribe.

"1. That whilst admitting that the letter of the late King, my most honoured lord and master, dated at Versailles, 1st April, 1766, in which he grants me an annual pension of twelve thousand francs, until he should place me more advantageously, can no longer serve as an authority of payment of the said pension, which is now changed, to my great benefit by the King his successor, into a life annuity of the same sum (I request) that the original of the said letter shall remain in my possession, as an honourable testimony that the late King deigned to render to my fidelity, my innocence, and my irreproachable conduct in all my misfortunes, and in all the affairs that he deigned to confide to me either in Russia, in the Army, or in England.

"2. That the original of the acknowledgment given to me by Monsieur Durand, Minister Plenipotentiary in England, on 11th July, 1766, of the voluntary delivery, faithful and intact, into his hands, of the secret order of the late King, dated at Versailles, 3rd June, 1763, shall remain in my hands

as authentic evidence of the entire submission with which I relinquished a secret order from the hand of my master, which was the only justification of my conduct in England, which my enemies have qualified as obstinate, and which in the ignorance of my extraordinary position in relation to the late King, they have even dared to call traitorous to the State.

"3. That His Majesty, as a special favour, will deign, as the late King did, to inform himself as to my place of residence and my existence, in order that my enemies should never attempt any fresh plot against my honour, my liberty, my person or my life.

"4. That the Cross of St. Louis that I gained at the peril of my life in the combats, sieges, and battles in which I assisted and in which I was wounded, and employed as *aide-de-camp*, and as Captain of Dragoons and Volunteers in the army of Broglie, with a courage attested by all the generals under whom I served, shall never be taken from me, and that the right to wear it upon any costume I may adopt shall be preserved to me to the end of my life.

"And if it is permitted to me to add a respectful request to these conditions, I would dare to observe that at the moment when I obey His Majesty in submitting to lay aside for ever the dress of a man, I am totally unprovided with everything—dresses, linen, and other articles of attire suitable to my sex, and that I have no money wherewith to purchase even ordinary requirements, and the money provided

by Monsieur de Beaumarchais is destined for the repayment of part of my debts, and I will not touch a farthing of it. Consequently, although I have no right to expect fresh kindnesses from your Majesty I will venture to solicit your bounty for a sum of money wherewith to purchase a woman's wardrobe, this sudden, extraordinary and obligatory expense being due to no act of mine, but arising solely from my obedience to Your Majesty's orders.

"And I, Caron de Beaumarchais, being empowered as above specified, allow the said Demoiselle d'Éon de Beaumont to retain the very honourable letter that the late King wrote to her from Versailles, 1st April, 1766, in awarding her a pension of twelve thousand francs, in recognition of her fidelity and services.

"I leave also the original letter of Monsieur Durand, as these documents could not be taken from her without a display of harshness on my part which would ill account with the kind and just intentions which Your Majesty shows towards the said Demoiselle Charles Geneviève Louise Auguste Andrée Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont. As to the Cross of St. Louis, which she desires to retain, with the right to wear it upon a woman's dress, I confess that in spite of the excessive kindness Your Majesty has shown me, and the trust you have placed in my prudence, zeal and intelligence for the settlement of all the conditions of this affair, that I fear to overstep the limits of my power in deciding a matter so delicate.

"On the other hand, considering that the Cross of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis has always been regarded solely as a proof and reward of soldierly valour, and that many officers, after having been decorated, have quitted the military service, and having become priests or magistrates, have worn upon the garb of their new profession the honourable proof that they had done their duty in a more dangerous calling, I do not consider that there would be any inconvenience in allowing the same liberty to a valiant woman, who having been brought up by her parents in man's clothes, and having bravely fulfilled all the perilous duties that the military calling demands, did not perceive the improper conditions under which she had been forced to live until it was too late to change them, and is not blameworthy for not having done so until the present time.

"Reflecting also that the rare example of this extraordinary woman is not likely to be frequently imitated by persons of her sex, and therefore would lead to ill consequences, and that if Joan of Arc, who saved the Throne, and the States of Charles VII, whilst fighting in man's clothes, had during the war obtained, like the said Demoiselle d'Éon de Beaumont, some military Order or distinction such as the Cross of St. Louis, there is no likelihood that, when her task was finished, the King in bidding her resume the dress of her sex, would have deprived her of her honourable reward of her valour, nor that any gallant French knight would have thought that decoration

profaned because it adorned the breast of a woman who, upon the field of honour, had always shown herself worthy to be a man.

"I dare therefore take it upon myself—not in my official capacity, as I fear to abuse my power, but as a man persuaded of the truth of his views as already set forth—I therefore take it upon myself, I say, to leave the Cross of St. Louis and the liberty to wear it on a woman's dress to Demoiselle d'Éon de Beaumont, without intending to bind your Majesty by such act if you should disapprove of my conduct, promising only to the said Demoiselle d'Éon to be her advocate with Your Majesty, and to establish, if need be, her right in that respect, which I deem to be legitimate, by a petition in which I will use the best efforts of my pen and my heart.

"As to the demand which the said Demoiselle d'Éon de Beaumont makes to the King for a sum of money for the purchase of her wardrobe, although that does not enter into my instructions, I will not cease to take it into consideration, because as a matter of fact, this expense is a natural consequence of the orders I gave her to resume the dress of her sex. I allow her therefore for the purchase of her wardrobe a sum of 2000 crowns, on condition that on leaving London, she does not take away any arms or clothes worn by men, in order that the desire to resume them may not be excited and heightened by their presence, but allowing her to retain the complete uniform of the regiment in which she served, that is to say, the helmet, sabre, pistols, musket and

bayonet, as a souvenir of her past life, or as one preserves the remains of a beloved object which no longer exists. All her other goods will be sold in London, and the money employed according to the desire and orders of Your Majesty."

The document concludes with the usual formula as to being "sealed, signed and delivered," is signed by both parties, and bears date of 5th October, 1775. As a matter of fact, the deed was not signed till 4th November, but 5th October was the Chevalier's birthday, and it was a poetical idea of Beaumarchais that the deed should be a sort of birth certificate of the new life d'Éon was to lead.

The iron box deposited with Lord Ferrers was opened by Beaumarchais; d'Éon, for his part entered so thoroughly into his new part that he wrote on 5th December, 1775, to Comte de Broglie:

"Monsieur le Comte,

"It is time to undeceive you. You had as Captain of Dragoons and *aide-de-camp* in war and politics, but the shadow of a man. I am but a woman, but I should have continued to play the part of a man all my life, if politics and your enemies had not rendered me the most unfortunate of unfortunate females, as you will see by the documents enclosed. . . .

"I am, with respect, Monsieur le Comte, your most humble and most obedient servant,

"Geneviève Louise Auguste
d'Éon de Beaumont."

Being now officially a woman, "la Chevalière" thought that it would be but right to "behave as sich," and started a kind of flirtation with Beaumarchais. She wrote to him, "You were made to be loved, and it would be terrible anguish to me to hate you." And a little later:

"I think it is but to do you justice to admire your talents and your generosity. I loved you already, but my situation was so new to me that I was far from believing that love could be born amidst such trouble and grief. Never could a sensitive nature become capable of love if love were not aroused by virtue."

Beaumarchais called Charlotte Geneviève "his little Dragooness"; but the idyll did not long endure. The tone of the letters exchanged became colder; and an article which appeared in the *Morning Post*, announcing that fresh bets were being made as to the identity of the ex-Captain of Dragoons, led to a catastrophe.

D'Éon accused Beaumarchais and Morande of having made bets about his sex; he even went so far as to challenge Morande, but the latter being aware that his adversary was cunning of fence, got out of the duel by declaring that he could not fight a woman. That did not disarm his pen, however, and he issued a scandalous libel against "la Chevalière."

Worried and harassed by all these troubles, d'Éon began to find that he needed a rest, and wrote

to Comte de Vergennes that he wished to return to France.

"If I decide to wear the dress of a woman, Monsieur le Comte, I wish to really pass as such in the eyes of a public that does not know the truth; those who do know it are not sufficiently numerous for their indiscretions to overbalance the force of appearances, but however limited the number of such men and women may be, it is still too numerous and must not be increased. What I consent to do is a very serious matter, and no man in the world ever made such a sacrifice for his King and country. I do not wish that what for me is the loss of an entire existence should be a childish joke for all the world; that it should see an amusing comedy in what is really a sad tragedy; that it should laugh at a harlequin when it ought to weep for a martyr. The title of martyr that I give myself is not exaggerated, Monsieur le Comte. I foresee and comprehend the physical and moral misery that I shall put on with a dress which will be for me what that of the centaur Nessus was on the limbs of Hercules. I shall burn like him, and that will be my shroud. Therefore I wish to prepare myself to put it on as one puts on the hair-shirt of penitence—with meditation and solemnity, with tears in my eyes and earth upon my head. Let me be pitied and not insulted, and if men do not uncover their heads when I pass, at all events they point not the finger of scorn at me. It is a mourning robe that I am going to put on,

and not a ball dress; I am willing to be an object of misfortune, but not of ridicule. If the public is once convinced that I am a man in disguise, I shall be thought nothing but a punchinello, a puppet, a walking masquerade; the children would run after me in the street and call me names.

"I make it therefore a first condition that in all future dealings with your agents, that they shall believe me to be of the feminine sex, or at least be ignorant that I am a man. That is a matter that I earnestly recommend to the attention and complaisance of Your Excellency."

Soon after writing this letter, Charlotte Geneviève d'Éon de Beaumont returned to France.

CHAPTER X

(1777–1785)

"La Chevalière" arrives in France—Visits Madame Louise of France—Ordered to assume woman's dress—Charlotte Geneviève d'Éon a subject of public curiosity—Madame Genet instructs "la Chevalière" how to behave as a woman—Fresh quarrels with Beaumarchais—Retires to St. Cyr—The old warlike spirit revives—Imprisoned in the Castle of Dijon—Banished to Tonnerre.

ON 13th August, 1777, la Chevalière Charlotte Geneviève d'Éon de Beaumont embarked for Calais; she still retained her military costume, not having yet made up her mind, in spite of the agreement she had signed, to don a woman's dress.

Having to pass through St. Denis, she resolved to pay a visit to Madame Louise of France, the abbess of the convent of Carmelite nuns. M. Paul Fromageot, the author of *La Chevalière d'Éon at Versailles*, has given us an account of this interview, as described by d'Éon.

"After dinner, Dom Boudier took our Chevalier to the Carmelite nunnery to pay homage and respect to Madame Louise of France, who was the abbess. Having entered the private parlour, Madame Louise, without drawing the curtain which

covered the iron grating, asked Dom Boudier, 'How is Mademoiselle d'Éon dressed?'

"*Dom Boudier:* 'Madame, she has just come from London, and is still in uniform and boots, and wears the Cross of St. Louis.'

"*Madame Louise:* 'In that case, I cannot see Mademoiselle in uniform. When she has put on woman's dress, I will receive her with pleasure. Let her remember that Louis XV, her good protector, is dead. She must calmly examine her present situation. It is difficult, for her sex has been discovered, rendered manifest and adjudged. Without a proper garb, she will not be received either in Paris or at Versailles. She cannot live in society, or in the army, if dressed as a man. It is a lucky reverse, not of fortune but of nature, which in curing her of her folly of being a soldier leads her to the happiness of a quiet life under the special protection of the King and Queen, and it is an event for which she ought to thank Providence. I cannot conceive how one who has the happiness to be born a woman can desire to lead the life of a dragoon. If Mademoiselle d'Éon is, as she is said to be, as wise as she is prudent, she will endeavour to turn her present circumstances to the best advantage.'

"*Mademoiselle d'Éon:* 'Madame, in speaking of the irreparable loss of your august father, and my illustrious protector, you reopen the wounds in my heart. My sex was never more safe than when it was hidden under a uniform, and the discovery that

was made by the pettifoggers of the Court of King's Bench in England, has given me a great aversion to the gown. When one has the happiness to be born a great and virtuous princess, like Madame Louise, I can understand that there is no desire to play the part of a dragoon; but I have not come here, Madame, in uniform to trouble your holiness in your sanctuary, surrounded by virgins consecrated to the Lord, whom you guide and exalt to evangelical purity. I could wish to be worthy of a condition so angelic, but I thought it was more prudent for me to obey the law of the Emperor Majorian, who in 458, forbade women to receive the veil of virginity before the age of forty-five years. How could I appear before the august daughter of Louis XV in a gown when I do not possess one, and how could I, of my own accord, strip myself of the uniform which he made me don. The power that gave it me can alone deprive me of it. How can I repent of having been brave in the army, and faithful both in war and peace, to the secrets the late King confided to me? If the Court has not the indulgence to receive me as I am, it will be not only cruel but difficult for me, at my age, to change my mode of life.'

"*Madame Louise:* 'A Christian woman changes and is converted at any age. Happy is she who, like you, has the time, the courage, and the opportunity, and you must take advantage of that.'

"*Mademoiselle d'Éon:* 'Up to now, Madame, all that I have done is in perfect obedience to the orders

and the secret wishes of Louis XV. Louis XVI knows that, and he also knows that I shall obey his decision. The absolute command that you have over me, predicts to me that my costume having the misfortune to displease you so much, I shall soon be denuded, like a victim sacrificed to the zeal of your piety and to the interest that you deign to take in me. Be persuaded, Madame, that I would even tear out one of my eyes if it offended you, as it says in the Bible, that I might appear irreproachable before you, and in order to serve the praise and glory of your noble religion.

" ' Your wisdom, Madame, lightens the eyes of my understanding, so that I know what is the confidence of my expectation, according to the riches, the power, the force and efficacy of the grace of Our Lord, who inflamed the heart of St. Theresa, your holy foundress, and who can, if He will, touch that of Geneviève d'Éon, and raise her above herself.' "

At these fine words, Madame Louise could contain herself no longer. She suddenly pulled back a portion of the curtain which covered the grating, and cried, " Grand Dieu ! Mademoiselle, how strange you are ! The singularity of your mind appears to me as extraordinary as your person. No matter ! I quite approve of your way of thinking, and I shall praise you when you have done that which you have to do. Then come and see me again. Profit by the good intentions of the Court towards you ; and do

not alienate the King's favour by running counter to his wishes, and appearing before him in the costume of a man. You would do well to leave your uniform at Paris and resume a woman's dress. You would thus avoid the unpleasantness of being compelled to put it on."

But Charlotte Geneviève was not at all accustomed to take advice or obey orders. The next day she started off for Versailles, and was not afraid to penetrate, booted and spurred, into the cabinet of Comte de Vergennes. She was by no means cordially welcomed, and the same evening she received a visit from "Monsieur Lietaud, first physician to the King, and Monsieur de Lassone, first physician to the Queen, accompanied by two matrons of the Court," who politely gave her to understand that petticoats would suit her admirably, and that she would be "locked up in a nunnery" if she continued to wear the clothes of a man.

A few days later, the Queen sent her a fan and 24,000 francs; and Mademoiselle Bertin, the leading dressmaker of the day, was commissioned to clothe the ex-captain of dragoons in suitable attire.[1]

Whilst his wardrobe was being prepared, Charlotte Geneviève, having nothing else to do, paid a visit to Tonnerre, but was quickly recalled to Ver-

[1] According to Gaillardet, Antoinette Maillot, another fashionable dressmaker, also supplied le Chevalière with fine dresses, two dressing-gowns, and various bodices, corsets, and other articles of female attire.

sailles, and ordered to definitely assume female dress.

"BY ORDER OF THE KING

"It is hereby ordered that Charles Geneviève Louise Auguste Andrée Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont shall desist from wearing the uniform of a dragoon officer and shall resume the habiliments of her sex, and is prohibited from appearing in the Kingdom in any other habiliments than those suitable to a woman.

"Given at Versailles this 27th August, 1777.

"LOUIS GRAVIER DE VERGENNES."

When once installed at Paris, la Chevalière became the object of a good deal of curiosity, which was sympathetic as a rule. Most people consented to believe that she was a woman, because such was the King's royal will and pleasure, but some who had known the hot-headed Chevalier in his youth were somewhat sceptical.

The Dowager-Countess of Ons-en-Bray wrote to him:

"Your letter made me laugh till I cried at your pranks, and also with satisfaction to find that you had not forgotten me, Mademoiselle or Monsieur (I am afraid to tell a lie). I own that I am still somewhat incredulous as to your metamorphosis, and to destroy my incredulity I cannot employ the same means used by the good apostle, St. Thomas. 'Mademoiselle' be it then—which renders it all the

easier for me to tell you how pleased I shall be to see you again when you return to Versailles. I would send you my kind regards, but I do not know whereabouts in Paris you conceal your female charms. Are they decked out in feathers? I must own that, to my mind, the helmet of Mars is the only headdress that suits your courage and inclinations. I have with me two young men who desire to renew acquaintance with you, and they desire it more than ever *now*, as you may readily believe. One of them is a fine fellow who occupies your old room; he would be willing to share it with you, but as a mother of a family, and bound to maintain good order in my household, I must believe that you are really a dragoon before I ask you to keep company with my boys night and day. . . . Take care of yourself, Mademoiselle, and be sure that in whatsoever form you may reappear, you would always be interesting to us on account of your old attachment to us, which is reciprocated by mine for you."

Madame Tercier, widow of the former "secret Minister" of Louis XV, is not astonished that his new disguise causes him some embarrassment, but assures him that in the eyes of his friends he will always pass for a brave man and a faithful subject, and wishes her name to appear at the head of the list of his most attached friends.

Monsieur Genet, the father of Madame Campan, is also rather bothered as to how to address the Chevalier, and so adopts the English formula, "My

dear friend," because, as he says, the English language does not bother itself about genders, and calls scarcely anything feminine except a cat and a ship.

The reputation or notoriety of the Chevalier had also crossed the Rhine, and a Berlin bookseller writes to ask if the man he knew twenty years ago as the Chevalier d'Éon is really the same person as the Chevalier d'Éon who is stated, in the German newspapers, to be a woman disguised as a man. The bookseller tries in his heavy, German, round-about way to pump the Chevalier, but without success.

Voltaire, who doubted most things, doubted whether the Chevalier was really a woman, and writes to Comte d'Argental :

" I will not speak to-day, my dear angel, of the two children I had in my eighty-fourth year. You will nourish them, if they please you, or you will let them die if they are counterfeits. But I must absolutely talk to you about a monster ; that is to say, that amphibious animal who is neither a girl or a boy, who is, it is said, actually dressed as a woman, who wears on his breast the Cross of St. Louis, and who has, like you, a pension of 12,000 francs. Is all that really true ? I do not believe that you are one of his friends if he is of your sex, nor one of her lovers, if she is of the other. You are best able to explain this mystery. He or she has informed me, through an English friend of mine,

that he or she intends to come to Ferney, and I am greatly bothered about it. I ask you, as a favour, to let me have the answer to this enigma."

Incredulity does not appear to have extended to the military comrades of our hero-heroine. Baron de Breguet writes :

" It is only a week ago that I returned from the country, and I hasten to ask my amiable comrade's permission to call upon her and pay my respects. I respectfully beg Mlle. d'Éon to permit me to embrace sincerely and with all my heart my old comrade in the Dragoons."

She had also written to her old Colonel, Marquis d'Antichamps, to announce that she was about to " take the veil," and he replies :

" I had a great affection for you when you were a captain and your new phase is not a detriment to that feeling ; and although it obliges me to respect you more, it does not deprive me of the pleasure of loving you ; so I must earnestly offer you the assurance of both sentiments."

Even the Queen desired to make the acquaintance of la Chevalière, but Comte de Vergennes heard of it, and had a private interview with Marie Antoinette. " Her Majesty," says Madame Campan, " came out of her cabinet with him, and seeing my father in the ante-chamber, expressed her regret at having given him useless trouble. She added

smilingly that what Comte de Verennes had told her had sufficed to satisfy her curiosity."[1]

But if she did not have a private interview, at least she could show herself—duly bedizened in feminine costume suitable for such a grand occasion—at one of the public receptions, and thereby greatly increase her notoriety. The author of *L'Espion Anglais*" (a kind of journal that retailed all the scandal of the day, edited by a professional libeller) records on 4th January, 1778 :

" She receives so many invitations from Parisians that she is unable to accept them all. She is quite at her ease in society, but retains the appearance, the conversation, and the freedom of speech of a Grenadier. . . . I have supped with her at different houses, and it must be confessed that she is more than ever like a man now she is a woman. One cannot believe in the feminine sex of an individual who shaves, has a beard, has the muscular form of a Hercules, jumps in or out of a carriage without help, and runs upstairs four steps at a time.

" She dresses in black, as becomes the widow of the secret of Louis XV. Her hair is cut round like that of an abbé, smothered in pomatum and powder, and surmounted by the flat cap of a devotee. She cannot get used to the high and small heels worn by ladies, but wears broad low heels. . . ."

One of her biographers, M. Homberg, has found a

[1] He was afterwards several times received by the Queen, or at all events he said so.

note-book in which "la Chevalière" has inscribed some of her engagements in the month of March, 1778, and from which it appears that she dined or supped—or sometimes both—every day with some more or less distinguished person. On one of these days she called on Voltaire, but does not record that she dined or supped with him.

These dinners and suppers bored rather than amused her; and besides which she found that stays were abominably stiff and petticoats cumbersome, so that whenever she could without fear of detection, she reassumed the military uniform. Vergennes, however, either heard of or suspected these occasional lapses into masculinity, and she received an invitation for a long visit to the house of Monsieur Genet, at Petit Montreuil, "where she would be *en famille*." She accepted, after a good deal of hesitation, and when there, behaved herself as a well brought up and right-minded young woman should, humbly obeying Madame Genet, and copying the behaviour of the young ladies of the family.

Madame Genet seems to have been quite satisfied with her conduct, as the following letter to d'Éon's mother will show:

"Since your dear daughter has been in my house, I and my daughters, Campan, Rousseau, and Genet, have used all means to teach her feminine manners. Her dress, corset, and shoes no longer embarrass her; indeed she finds them decent and convenient

in every respect. As she knows that she has to always wear them she has got used to them, both by reason and necessity. I see, however, that it bores her to sit quiet all day in a room along with my daughters. She does not play at any game, and does not much like to use her fingers ; if she does any tapestry work it is as a great favour. Her only pleasure is reading, and her chief desire to walk in the park, or prowl about the woods of Satory, Meudon, Marly, St. Germain, and St. Cloud. I do not allow her to go out on foot, and have made her understand that though that was quite proper when she wore a uniform, she did not then occupy the same rank that she does to-day. She has my carriage, and Monsieur de Lançon sends her one from the King's stables, whenever she asks for it, and he takes pleasure in doing this because he has conceived a great friendship for Mademoiselle d'Éon, and so also has his wife, Madame de Lançon, formerly first lady's-maid to Madame Louise, who from the depths of her cloister protects your dear daughter. . . . I compel her to study whilst she is with me, and as she wants to learn, she will soon become quite clever. When that auspicious day does arrive, we shall begin our great work, which is to make her a perfect woman by a good marriage which we intend for her. . . .

" Her greatest misery here is to be finely dressed, and adorned with all the presents given her by the Queen and the ladies attached to the Court ; to be fully dressed every day before dinner, and to appear

in the best clothes on Sundays and holidays at Chapel, before the King and Queen and in the apartments of the Château.

"The Queen treats her very kindly both at Versailles and Trianon, where, by her order, she goes to the private balls along with my daughters, Campan and Adelaide. When she goes there, the Captain of the Château gives her a good dinner. The Queen takes a pleasure in sending her the best dishes and the best wines from her table. She has her place in the private box of Monsieur and Madame Campan at the Comédie or at the Château, or the Queen's theatre, where she often goes, against her inclination, to get accustomed to appear in public. She is often invited to dinner by the great lords and ladies of the Court.

"Her greatest grief is that she cannot leave Versailles without the permission of the Controller of the King's Household. She looks upon herself as being a bird in a cage.

"Every week and every month sees a fresh improvement in Mademoiselle d'Éon; and you must not be surprised at that, her conversion being made under the eyes of the Court, which has performed miracles both on her heart and mind. As she cannot appear anywhere except in the complete costume of her sex, she is compelled to assume a behaviour suitable to the decency of her dress, and preserve the position for which she is destined by nature and the King's orders.

". . . To do her justice, I must say that since

we have encouraged her to look forward to being honourably established, it has led to her being desirous to learn how to manage a household. This hope—which has a very natural origin—has induced her to take part in our house work, and to fulfil all the duties and occupations of a woman. This voluntary submission, which unites the harmony of her conduct with the decency of her attire, gives us no reason to doubt her desire to find tranquillity in the care of a household, and happiness in a marriage, 'provided,' she says, 'she is married to a brave soldier, and not to a banker, who looks upon a wife as no more than a cipher, unless she brings him more money than virtue. . . .'"

For la Chevalière to pretend that she wants to be married seems to be the height of absurdity. It is worthy of remark, however, that no one in the household of Madame Genet appears to have entertained the slightest doubt about her being a woman, although she was under observant eyes all day and every day. How did she manage to play so perfectly and faultlessly a part for which nature had not intended her?

This good behaviour could not last for ever. The family life of the Genet household was far too quiet for the restless Chevalière, and a day came when Mademoiselle d'Eon quietly slipped away from Petit Montreuil and returned to Paris, where she took up her residence in the Rue de Conti. Early in 1778 she was often to be seen at the theatre, in

the box of one of her lady friends, Madame de Marchais.

Being now at the height of her popularity, Charlotte Geneviève proposed to bring out a volume of anecdotes about her adoption of the feminine garb, and notes about the different political negotiations in which she had taken part. The book dwindled down into an article entitled " The Military, Political and Private Life of Mademoiselle d'Éon, known, until 1777, under the name of Chevalier d'Éon." It appeared in *Military Annals*, under the signature of Monsieur de la Fortelle.

On their side, painters, draughtsmen, caricaturists and engravers, brought out a regular avalanche of portraits, in which la Chevalière was depicted as a dragoon, as a woman, or sometimes half man and half woman ; and as being young, old, ugly, pretty, masculine or feminine. The one which we reproduce shows a liberal amount of a large bust, " the breasts' superb abundance " being hardly veiled by a light lace kerchief. On her bosom is the Cross of St. Louis.

During his masculine career, the Chevalier had made many enemies, and the change of sex had by no means induced them to lay down their arms. Beaumarchais was the first to give signs of life. It should be said in his defence, that his negotiations with the Chevalier had been freely criticized and he had been made to appear contemptible or ridiculous. Some even accused him of having pocketed 60,000 francs entrusted to him where-

with to pay the debt of Charlotte Geneviève to Lord Ferrers.[1]

Others laughed heartily at the recital of the love affairs of Caron de Beaumarchais and la Chevalière d'Éon de Beaumont, and a good deal of fun was poked at the amours of the author of the "Barber" and his "lady love." Beaumarchais was one of the wittiest men of his time, but he had not the good sense to "do well and let people talk." He requested the aid of the Minister to help him to put a stop to these calumnies.

Monsieur de Vergennes replied by giving him a testimonial as to his honesty, and even added some high praise, and authorized him to publish his letter, which Beaumarchais did not fail to do. But he made a mistake in also publishing an open letter to the Chevalière, who replied in the following sarcastic epistle:

"MONSEIGNEUR,

"Now that I have obeyed the orders of the King by resuming woman's dress on Saint Ursula's day, and am living in tranquillity and silence, in the garb of a vestal, and had entirely forgotten Caron and his boat, what is my surprise at receiving a letter from the said Sieur Caron, to which is joined a certified copy of the original of a letter that he says he addressed to you, and your reply thereto.

[1] We shall see later on that there were some doubts as to whether Lord Ferrers had behaved quite honestly.

"Although I know my Beaumarchais by heart, I own, Monseigneur, that his deceit, and the means he has taken to get it believed, have still more astonished me.

"Monsieur de Beaumarchais, not being able to make me dishonest enough to share his views and help his speculations as to my sex, has published everywhere at Paris that he was to have married me, after I had lived seven months in the convent of St. Antoine, whereas, as a matter of fact, he narrowly escaped marrying my cane when he was in London. But his name alone is a remedy against nuptial love, and that Acherontic name would frighten any dragooness, however resolved she was on nocturnal combats and outpost engagements.

"Moreover, I ought to warn you, Monseigneur, that in many first-class houses in Paris, false Demoiselles d'Éon, wearing the Cross of St. Louis, have presented themselves. They were buffoons who passed pleasant jests about the acquirements of the real Chevalière, but principally about the agreeable, honest, brave Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais. . . . This scene has been infinitely varied, and was repeated, I am told, last week, whilst I solitary and tranquil, was working and sleeping in my hermitage at Petit Montreuil near Versailles. Does Monsieur de Beaumarchais, who is so naturally inclined to mystify all the world, wish to enjoy that exclusive privilege to himself?

"I tell you, Monseigneur, that all the integrity of four Ministers, united to your own, and including

that of their chief clerks, would not be capable of making Monsieur de Beaumarchais, in spite of all the certificates in the world, an honest man in this business of mine. The perfect knowledge that his past conduct has given me of his person has forced me to place him, in spite of myself, in the class of persons who ought to be hated if one would preserve one's self-esteem."

La Chevalière followed up this first attack with a short but violent "appeal to her contemporaries":

"Monsieur de Beaumarchais wishes to deprive me of the respect and consideration which are the charm of my life. I confound him and I laugh at his impotent wrath. He is a Thersites who ought to be whipped for having dared to speak insolently of persons who are better than himself, and whom he ought to respect. I denounce him, and I deliver him over to all the women of the age, as one who wished to exalt his own reputation at the expense of a woman, and revenge his frustrated hopes by crushing a woman who has a heartfelt desire to see the glory of her fellow-women triumphant."

The publication of this appeal brought her many congratulatory letters. Her *prestige* increased and that of Beaumarchais diminished, and she was cited as a model of grace, intelligence and virtue.[1]

[1] Abbé Sabatier de Castres inserted an article about her in the new edition of his *Three Centuries*. About the same time there appeared at Brussels a book, *On the Physical and Moral Education of Women*, with an alphabetical notice of those distinguished in

This encounter with Beaumarchais was hardly finished when Charlotte Geneviève learned that the Court of King's Bench had declared all bets and policies regarding her sex to be illegal; and she gushes out in the following song of triumph:

"Victory! my contemporaries! four pages of victory! My honour, your honour, triumph. The Lord Chief Justice of England, and twelve other judges, have quashed and cancelled all their former judgments concerning the validity of policies and wagers, etc., regarding my sex. That is the glorious effect of the terrible lesson I gave that tribunal before leaving for France. This final verdict of 31st January has been opposed by all who maintained that, judging by my conduct, I was a man, and on the strength of the two former verdicts, claimed the amount of the bets they had made. In the public protests, that I had the courage to pronounce in the English language, I said that the necessary verification would wound decency and morals, and that as a third person, who was uninterested in the dispute, would be affected (that was I, Chevalière d'Éon) all proceedings ought to be annulled.

different careers." *L'Esprit des Journaux*, in a notice of this book, says, "It is not only the illustrious dead who are mentioned in this book, but living models for imitation are cited, like that living Amazon, the celebrated virgin of Tonnerre, with whose adventures, from the time of her entering College Mazarin to her sojourn in London and return to France, we are all of us acquainted." *Esprit des Journaux*, Vol. 7, p. 87.

"Oh, my country! let me congratulate you that you did not receive the gold gained by a means so infamous. You have so many arms and so many hearts ready to tear from insolent England richer and more glorious spoils.

"Shade of Louis XV, acknowledge the being that your power created; I compelled England to submit to the laws of honour. Women! receive me in your bosom: I am worthy of you!"

It will be evident from this that the Chevalier has now irrevocably changed his sex: moreover, he writes:[1]

"After the decision of the Court of King's Bench, which on 2nd July, 1777, was not satisfied with declaring me a woman, but also a virgin, on my return to Versailles, by order of the law and the King, I was compelled to change my apparel, shirt, lodgings, resolution, opinions, language, colour, face, fashion, voice, and manner of behaviour. The apparel of a man having been taken from me, there remained nothing but my virginity, which has not consoled me for the loss of the rose in my hat. My sudden and public conversion has changed my misfortune into good. . . . It is certain that it is better to go to heaven by a new road than to remain in the old road to hell. It is certain that, in every country, it is better to be a good girl than a bad boy."

[1] Manuscript of an article by d'Éon entitled, "Concerning my Change," in the private collection of M. Paul Fromageot.

Unable to be a man, la Chevalière is determined that no one shall any longer doubt about her feminine sex. So she conceived the excellent idea of passing a " retreat " for some months' duration in a convent, and asked permission to retire to the nunnery of St. Louis de St. Cyr.

" In my retreat," she writes from the convent, " with my faithful companions, no evil can hurt me, and all good is in my power. All my time has been employed in prayer, in dressing and undressing, and in fulfilling all the duties, functions, and occupations of a Christian woman. I have not had to fear the kicks of horses, or the underhand digs of a Minister of Foreign Affairs, and of an Ambassador, who is a novice in goodness but a doctor in mischief, and more to be feared than sunstroke or cannon. If I have suffered from evil tongues, it has not been in my presence ; folks knew that I was able to reply. But a kind of life so uniform and monotonous soon bored me, and though my head did not travel post it sauntered in vagabond voyages from one pole to the other. This has made me regret the time I passed in the tumult of the world, and all the commotions and dangers of war and peace. But the more I made these philosophical reflections and Christian meditations on my condition, the less I felt the misfortune of my fall from horseback, which has been the innocent cause of my misfortune and my happiness. The Queen, having learned that the sedentary life of the retreat bored me horribly,

promptly removed me, and placed me amongst her women servants at Versailles, in order that I should be instructed more quickly and more completely.

"Thus a thing which in itself is not agreeable becomes so through the circumstances which accompany it. This special kindness on the part of the Queen has served to better my condition for the time being, but it has in no wise cured me of my sorrow, which makes me a prisoner of war in a gown all the rest of my life. My situation requires many sacrifices if I would gain the sympathy proper to my sex. Patience, habitude and *vis naturæ* are the three great masters of my reformation."

By this time *le* Chevalier d'Éon is really dead, but Mademoiselle Charlotte Geneviève d'Éon de Beaumont survives, and is already accustomed to wear women's clothes. She has also become a great favourite with the pious dames of St. Cyr, as the following letters will show :

"Mother de Montchevreuil, our Abbess, gives me a very agreeable commission, Mademoiselle, in commanding me to give you a fresh assurance of the pleasure your visit gave us, and the expression of the esteem with which you have inspired all who form our community. Being desirous of reiterating the truth of these sentiments, we leave you to choose between Monday and Tuesday for the second visit you propose to make, but as we cannot too soon enjoy the legitimate satisfaction that your visit will cause us, we hope that you will choose Monday.

"As for me, who have had the honour of accompanying you and of seeing you closely, I can assure you that I add to the feeling of esteem and admiration for Monsieur le Chevalier d'Éon that of an attachment for Mademoiselle, of whom I have the honour to be the most humble and obedient servant,

"Sister de Durfort.

"Convent of St. Louis, 10th September, 1778."

Two days later la Chevalière replies :

"When I compare the happiness of the solitude you enjoy, and which I have always loved without the power to possess it in the terribly agitated life that I have led for more than forty years in the world, in the various armies and courts of Europe in which I have been, I feel how far the demon of glory has removed me from the God of humility. . . . The only thing that consoles me now, is that amidst all the perturbations of camps, sieges, and battles, I have had the honour to preserve intact the flower of purity, the precious and fragile pledge, alas ! of our morals and our faith. . . . Permit me to offer you a copy of the best print that was made of me during my residence in England. I am represented as Pallas."

La Chevalière having expressed a desire to see a neophyte take the veil, the same nun writes to inform her when the ceremony will take place ; and adds that the Superior of the Mission Fathers would be glad of her company at dinner afterwards—a dinner to which the Abbess will contribute some

leverets and partridges from the convent preserves. The nun, who is an adept at laying on flattery with a trowel, says she is not surprised that the holy Fathers enjoy her society, and see her, read her, and hear her, because anyone who has once seen her, read her, and heard her, will be sure to want to see her, read her, and hear her again and again.

Charlotte Geneviève modestly replies :

" It is no doubt, to lower my pride, and cast down my worldly courage, that you wish that I should be a spectator, next Monday, of the moving spectacle of two white and innocent doves being plucked and sacrificed before my eyes on the altar of the King of Kings. Ah ! if I consulted but my courage, I should willingly save them and carry them off at the moment of sacrifice, even as the brave Dunois saved the fair Dorothea from the stake ;[1] but the light of faith, the purity of the victims, the grandeur of the God to whom they sacrifice themselves, the utility and the sanctity of the functions to which they are about to devote themselves for life, in giving perfect education to the daughters and mothers of heroes, not only suspends my arm and binds down my natural and ' dragoon ' wrath, but enlightens my mind and raises my soul above the level of itself.

" In spite of the warlike ardour that men and soldiers allow me, I cannot prevent myself from crying from the bottom of my heart, that I am very

[1] Voltaire : *La Pucelle.*

cowardly when I calmly consider, Mesdames, the grandeur and the depth of the sacrifice you make to God. I am like St. Augustin, I sometimes seek the grace of God, but I fear lest one of his beams should strike me to the heart. I am too guilty, too cowardly to ask it myself. Be to me a second St. Monica, and pray to God for me. . . . Then when I shall approach your holy abode, I can question myself as Arsenius did in the wilderness, and I shall say from the bottom of my heart, 'What brings you to the desert, unless it is to do penitence and weep for your sins? Thou hast rendered unto Cæsar that which was Cæsar's; render therefore unto God that which is God's.'"

After the usual conclusion, there is a postscript:

"It is very kind of Madame de Montchevreuil to send leverets and partridges for my dinner, but a plate of salad suffices to make me a good dinner. I was not born a sensualist, I am happy to say. I know how to sleep upon straw, or on the ground, and to live on nothing but bread and water. I know that Our Lord said that 'Man does not live by bread alone, but also by the Word of God.' Therefore I shall endeavour to nourish my soul on His Word by listening attentively to the excellent discourse which will be pronounced in your church on Monday next, on the occasion of the holy sacrifice of your two victims. Madame de Montreuil must not send me any sweetmeats, or preserves, for no sweet food has ever entered my body. I am not devout enough

for that. But do not let my want of *gourmandise* make you despair of my conversion ; with me it is a matter of custom and education. When I was young, my mother always told me that only girls eat sweetmeats and jams, and for that reason I never eat them, for fear that my secret should be discovered."

Not content with flattery in prose, her friends at St. Cyr write very indifferent verse about Mademoiselle d'Éon. In another letter, Sister de Durfort writes :

" I was going to forget, Mademoiselle, to send you some *quatrains*, composed by a missionary who is residing here, and who had the honour of dining with you on the occasion of your last visit. He is a cousin, and bears the same name of Sedaine, a French poet and academician. He is not the first who has celebrated you, and he will not be the last to celebrate you. I promise also to make some verses about you when you have triumphantly turned to ways of grace."

Here are the verses by Sedaine's cousin :

Pallas and d'Éon, both warriors wise,
Resemble each other in many ways ;
But of the twain, it seems in my eyes
That d'Éon deserves the greater praise.

Who was Pallas ? A fabulous being
Born in a Grecian poet's brain !
But d'Éon is real ; we are constantly seeing
Her deeds recorded again and again.

But it is not against our affrighted foes
That her greatest feats of arms were done;
A greater victory far than those
Is that she, over herself, has won.

The soft manners, the submissiveness to the King's orders, and the feminine modesty of la Chevalière were all put on along with her dress, and were not her real nature. When it was announced that France was going to help America to establish her independence, the warlike spirit of Charlotte d'Éon revived, and she asked de Vergennes and de Sartine for permission to rejoin the military or naval service, but her request was bluntly refused.

This did not discourage her, and she wrote to Monsieur de Maurepas as follows:

"Monseigneur, I do not desire to interrupt for an instant the precious moments that you consecrate to the welfare and glory of France, but animated by a desire to contribute thereto to the best of my small ability, I am forced to call to your mind, most humbly but very forcibly, that the year of my female noviciate has expired, and that it is impossible for me to continue in that condition—the expense is too great, and my income is too small. In that condition I could not be useful to the King's service, nor to myself, nor to my family, and the very sedentary life I lead ruins the elasticity of my body and mind. From the days of my youth, I have been used to lead an active life, either in the army or in politics, and inaction entirely kills me.

"I renew my petition this year, Monseigneur,

that you would grant me, by the King's order, permission to continue my military service, and as there is no war on land, to serve as a volunteer in the fleet of the Comte d'Orvilliers.

"I have been able so far, in obedience to the orders of the King and his Ministers, to remain in petticoats in time of peace, but in the time of war that is impossible for me. I am sick with grief, and ashamed to find myself in such a position at a time when I could serve my King and my country with the zeal, courage and experience that God and my labours have given me. I am as ashamed as I am disconsolate to be quietly devouring at Paris, during the war, the pension that the late King deigned to grant me. I am always ready to sacrifice for his august grandson both my pension and my life. I returned to France under your auspices, Monseigneur, and therefore I confidently entrust my present and future fate to your generous protection, and I shall be all my life, with the most scrupulous gratitude, your etc. etc."

To back up the above request, Mademoiselle d'Éon also addressed the following letter to several ladies of the Court :

"Madame, I earnestly beg of you to use your influence with the King's Ministers to procure the success of my request formulated in the enclosed letter to Comte Maurepas, to allow me to serve as a volunteer in the fleet of Comte d'Orvilliers, as I foresee that there will be less fighting on land this

year than last. You bear, Madame, a name with which military glory is familiar; as a woman you love that of our sex. I have endeavoured to sustain that glory during the last war in Germany, and in negotiating with the different Courts of Europe during twenty-five years. There now remains for me but the hope of fighting at sea in the Royal Navy, where I trust to acquit myself in such a manner that you will not regret having favoured the willingness of her who has the honour to be, with profound respect . . .

"La Chevalière d'Éon."

She quickly received an answer, but it was not of the kind she wished or expected, for on 20th March, 1779, she was arrested at her residence in the Rue de Noailles, and taken off to Dijon. She remained in prison in the castle there for about a month, while the limbs of the law ransacked her lodgings to find evidence that she had been a spy in the pay of England.

Her imprisonment was by no means rigorous; in fact, she received almost as many visitors in her prison as she did when she was at liberty in Paris, and as the search had yielded no documents which could incriminate her, she was released, but with strict orders to betake herself to Tonnerre, and not quit that pleasant old town without the permission of the Court.

The life she led there was quiet and almost uneventful, and the cares of the house, the kitchen-

garden, and the vineyard filled up her time. "To cultivate her mind," she corresponded with Lalande and Cassini, the celebrated astronomers, and de Buffon, the naturalist. She still enjoyed a certain amount of celebrity or notoriety. In 1781, a shipbuilder at Nantes asked permission to name a new ship *La Chevalière d'Eon*. Perhaps this was because, a short time previously, la Chevalière had intended to construct and equip a privateer to capture English vessels, but the plan came to nothing.

During the winter of 1780–81, Charlotte Geneviève was granted permission to come to Paris to settle some private business, but early in the spring she returned to Tonnerre of her own accord.

She had now become quite reconciled to her feminine costume, and lived quietly in her Burgundian retreat, without indulging in any mannish aspirations. She received many visitors, amongst them being Prince Henry of Prussia, whom she had known when she was in Germany.[1]

She also seems to have belonged to a curious kind of Masonic Lodge known as the "Nine Sisters," which apparently consisted of a mixture of both sexes. At all events, she was invited to a Memorial

[1] "Prince Henry, brother of the King of Prussia, paid a visit to Mlle. la Chevalière d'Éon. Madame d'Éon pressed H.R.H. to partake of some refreshments, and brought forward a dish of splendid prunes, which the Prince declined, whereupon Mlle. d'Éon cried, 'What are you thinking of, mother? Monseigneur did not come here *pour des prunes!*'—which is a French idiomatic expression for 'on a fool's errand,' or 'to no purpose.'" See *Esprit des Journaux*, fifteenth year, Vol. 2.

Service held in commemoration of deceased brothers, and was invited in the threefold capacity of " mason, author, and the glory of both sexes." The " brother " who sends this singular invitation says that no one but Mademoiselle d'Éon could break down the barrier which excludes the fairer half of the population ; and the exception to the rule begins and ends with her ; so he hopes she will accept, and if she should, would be kind enough to come early in order to see the whole of a ceremony which would not be complete without her.

CHAPTER XI

(1785–1810)

"La Chevalière" returns to England—Takes up her abode in London—The French Revolution—Charlotte Geneviève is reduced to giving fencing lessons to earn her living—Poverty—Death.

IN 1785, Charlotte Geneviève requested permission of Comte de Vergennes to visit England. Her creditors had never been paid in full, and some of them began to show their teeth, and threatened to sell the library and the weapons which had been left there. La Chevalière declared that Lord Ferrers had not properly used, or had used improperly, the money which had been entrusted to him to pay the Chevalier's debts. Lord Ferrers was dead, but of course his heirs were legally responsible.

Comte de Vergennes did not reply to this application, whereupon Mademoiselle d'Éon came to Paris, and had hardly arrived when she received a letter from Mr. Lautem, the landlord of the house the Chevalier had inhabited in London, and to whom he owed £400. Lautem threatened, if he were not paid immediately, to sell by auction certain papers concerning the Secret Ministry, which had come into his hands by accident. Charlotte Geneviève at once

informed the Minister, who replied that he did not believe that anything of importance had been left behind by the Chevalier, but nevertheless he was prepared to go as far as £200 to settle the matter. Lautem plainly refused to accept anything short of the full amount, which made de Vergennes think that the papers were perhaps more valuable than he had at first supposed, and he at once gave la Chevalière permission to proceed to England.

She arrived in London, 18th November, 1785, and with the 6000 *livres*, with which de Vergennes had furnished her, was able to satisfy some, at least, of her creditors, beginning with Lautem, at whose house she stayed. She recovered possession of the documents he had retained, and sent them off without delay to Versailles.

As the payment of these debts had practically exhausted her resources, she tried to find work on some of the London journals. Morande offered to assist her, and introduced her to some of the editors, but she was rather suspicious of him, and did not avail herself of his offer as she had better friends. Monsieur Barthélemy, the *chargé d'affaires* in the absence of the French Ambassador, was particularly attentive to her; he accompanied her when she was invited to dinner, and placed one of the Embassy carriages at her constant disposal. When the Ambassador—Marquis de la Luzerne—returned, he also showed her great kindness.

Being more convinced than ever that Lord Ferrers had not acted honestly by her, she brought

an action against his heirs. She obtained a verdict in her favour, but the heirs of Lord Ferrers, by means of legal quibbles and chicanery, managed to postpone payment, and—as has happened to many another suitor—la Chevalière never received any of the money, to which she was entitled.

We hear no more about her until the outbreak of the French Revolution, which she hailed with delight. She now turned Jacobin, and called herself "Citoyenne Geneviève." On 14th July, 1790, the *citoyenne* called together the members of the French colony to celebrate the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. The meeting was held at Turnham Green. Charlotte Geneviève made a violent harangue, which was reproduced in some of the London papers:

"Brothers, friends, companions, compatriots, free Frenchmen, all members of the same family, soldiers, citizens devoted to the service of our regenerated country, we ought, as Frenchmen in a foreign land, to be desirous to give our dear country fresh proofs of a zeal which will not expire till the end of our lives.

"We joyfully swear on our honour, and on the altar of our country, in presence of the God of armies, to remain faithful to the Nation, the Law, and the King of France, and to maintain to the best of our power the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly, and accepted by His Majesty. May the perfidious violator of this sacred compact perish;

and he who religiously observes it be ever prosperous!

"Yes, my brave compatriots, we ought, at the peril of our lives, to maintain the decrees which emanate from the wisdom of the august tribunal of the National Assembly, which has erected the edifice of our bliss upon an immovable basis.

"We ought to renew the respectful homage of our affection to the tender father—the citizen monarch whose glory and honour consist in that of his people.

"To put a final seal upon our sacred pledges, let us appeal to the all-powerful protection of the God of Peace. Let us, with pure hearts, call upon Him to support a cause so holy and so just.

"And since the Eternal has, by nature, inscribed it on the hearts of all men, may Frenchmen never lose sight of the sublimity of their Constitution, but regard it as a national dogma, and always remain faithful to it. These are my ardent wishes, in the name of that Liberty for which it would be glorious to die, and without which it would be horrible to live."

La Chevalière, feeling confident that this display of patriotism would make an excellent impression on the revolutionary party, hastened to offer her services to the Legislative Assembly.

"In my excessive impatience," she writes, "I have lost everything except my uniform and the sword which I wore in my early wars. Of my

library, there remains nothing except a manuscript work by Vauban, that I have kept as an offering to the National Assembly, for the glory of my country, and the instruction of the brave generals charged with its defence."

The Legislative Assembly highly approved of this petition, and transmitted it to the War Committee—by whom it was duly pigeon-holed and forgotten; or perhaps the Committee did not consider that the sword of an old woman past sixty was worth much. But if the revolutionists did not require her services, the legitimists did, and she was pressed by some of her friends to join the army of *émigrés* assembled at Coblentz. One of these *émigrés* writes to la Chevalière:

"Would it be possible, my very dear heroine, for you to delay longer to join the French nobility now collected round Coblentz and Houdeharde. At the time I am writing, there is no one left in France but infirm old noblemen and children; what will all the others say if they do not see you arrive either at Tournay—where I am—or else at Mons, Ath, Brussels, or Coblentz. Yes, my dear heroine, if you delay much longer, you will arrive too late for the opportunity to acquire great glory, and then all the brave French knights will say to you as Henry IV did to Crillon, 'Hang yourself, brave Crillon!' Many here are surprised not to see you where true honour leads, and amongst those who do not know you, there are some who say you are a demagogue.

"I have replied to these calumnies by placing my hand upon the sword you taught me to use, and swearing by this same weapon, that you gave me, that these unbelievers would very shortly see you, and if they did not, that the said sword would be sent back to you along with a distaff. I do not say this, my dear heroine, to excite you, because I believe you are too right-minded to need that, but to assure you that I am and wish to be your true knight to defend you against everyone.

"On arriving at Coblentz, whither I am going, address yourself to my friend, Monsieur de Preaurat, who has been charged by the Princes to receive all new arrivals. Yes, my dear heroine, before long there will be no honest folks left in France, except those whom their infirmities, or their want of means prevent from leaving, there are many of these whom we help as best we can. Yes, I think that now you can eclipse the Maid of Orleans! What an honour for the good town of Tonnerre, which expects you to act up to the high principles you have, and which the cause of honour will not suffer you to abandon."

At the end of this letter, there are these few lines written in another hand:

"The Baroness of the other world (?) can add nothing to the style of the brave Chevalier who has written this letter, except the desire she has to see her heroine arrive. She begs her to send her reply to Monsieur Mazorel, *poste restante*, Tournay, where she will be well received."

Perhaps Charlotte Geneviève would have accepted this invitation rather than be doomed to a life of inaction, but she had not the means of undertaking the journey, and had possibly heard that money was scarce amongst the *émigrés* at Coblentz. Her pension stopped in 1790, and she had to do something to gain a living, so she bethought herself of giving "assaults at arms." She was remarkably skilful in the use of the small sword, and her fencing contests were very successful in bringing in money and praise. In some of the London papers, there was an account of an exhibition she gave at Carlton House, where, in spite of the fact that she was "embarrassed with three petticoats," she held her own against her antagonist, who was no other than the redoubtable Chevalier de Saint George, considered to be the finest swordsman of the day.[1]

The Prince of Wales complimented her on her skill, and presented her with a pair of pistols.

The novelty of these fencing exhibitions soon wore off, and as she was once more becoming "hard up," her friends opened a subscription on her behalf, and collected a sum of £455, of which the Prince of Wales subscribed £100.

[1] She was not really compelled to wear a woman's dress, the Revolution having put a stop to that obligation, but she continued to wear the petticoats till the end of her life. In so doing she was actuated by three reasons: (1) she had become accustomed to petticoats; (2) that she lacked the moral courage to face the scandal which a change of sex would have produced; (3) that she would have lost the notoriety which her success as a woman-fencer had brought her.

With this money, she started—according to Gaillardet—on a tour in the provinces, with a small company consisting of a fencer named Recouvrot, a Mrs. Bateman, a singer who did a musical turn between the bouts; and Jacob de Launay, who combined the varied vocations of acting-manager, housekeeper, cook and valet.

The tour was fairly successful. We give the text of one of her "posters."

"BY PERMISSION

"On Monday next, 6th July, 1795, in the assembly room of the Birmingham Hotel.

"The celebrated Chevalière d'Éon will give a grand assault at arms in the exact representation of attack and defence with the small sword, against an English gentleman, a professor of fencing, in conformity with the best methods as now practised by the first masters in Europe.

"In this assault will be shown all the skill and address of the science of fencing.

"The Chevalière will appear clad in the same uniform which she wore when she served as Captain and *aide-de-camp* to Marshal Prince Duke de Broglie, in Germany.

"The doors will open at 11 a.m., and the fencing will commence at noon precisely.

"ADMISSION: Ladies and Gentlemen, 28 shillings.

"TICKETS may be had of Mademoiselle d'Éon at the Birmingham Hotel."

THE ASSAULT OR FENCING-MATCH WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN MADEMOISELLE LA CHEVALIÈRE D'EON DE BEAUMONT AND MONSIEUR DE ST. GEORGE ON THE 9TH OF APRIL 1787 AT CARLTON HOUSE IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, SEVERAL OF THE NOBILITY AND MANY EMINENT FENCING MASTERS OF LONDON

From the painting by Robineau. Engraved by V. M. Picot

Another of her bills announced :

" Charlotte Geneviève Louise d'Éon, formerly known under the name of Chevalier d'Éon, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis, Minister Plenipotentiary of France to the Court of Great Britain, etc., . . . having resided thirty-three years at No. 38, Brewer Street, Golden Square, London, etc., . . . in 1777, by judgment of the Court of King's Bench, and by special order of the King of France obliged to resume the dress of a woman, and to be restored to the names, titles, and conditions of Mademoiselle d'Éon de Beaumont in her native country.

" Not having been able since the Revolution in France and during the war, to touch her pension (having thus suffered the heavy loss of 15,000 francs per year) which had been granted by the last kings of France, Louis XV and Louis XVI, as a reward for her political and military services.

" Also prevented from touching the revenue derived from her estates at Tonnerre, in Burgundy. Having had, moreover, the misfortune to be defrauded of the sum of £6000, deposited by the last King of France in the hands of an English lord for maintenance in England, she has lost all her fortune, but has borne this loss with calm and philosophic resignation.

" Whilst awaiting the return of peace, she finds herself at present under the necessity, despite her age of 68 years, to have resource to her skill and

long experience in the science of fencing to gain her living without being chargeable to anyone."

Very soon after the publication of this announcement, a serious accident put an end to these fencing exhibitions. In the course of an assault at Southampton, on 26th August, 1796, against a man named de Launay, who was her *prévot*, or assistant, the foil of the latter broke, and she received a serious wound. Luckily some medical men were present, and her wound received prompt attention. We annex a copy of the certificate given by the doctors :

"We certify that being present at a grand assault at arms given publicly by Mademoiselle d'Éon, on Friday, 26th August, in the Long Room at Southampton, we saw her receive a dangerous wound, the button of the foil of her adversary having broken off about an inch from the extremity of the foil. Upon examination we found in the right armpit a wound extending laterally to the depth of about four inches, and involving severe laceration of the muscles, which caused intense pain lasting several days—pain which she bore with the greatest moral courage, patience and resignation.

"J. Mackie, Physician.
"Bernard and Corbin, Surgeons.

"Southampton, 6th September, 1796."

She was never able to handle the foil again ; she was four months in recovering from the effects of the wound, and during all that time—and indeed

to the end of her life—was carefully nursed, tended and supported by her friend, Mrs. Cole.[1]

In spite of her age, poverty, and physical suffering, Charlotte Geneviève still entertained a hope that she would return to France. Citizen Otto, who was the Republican Commissioner in London, took an interest in her, and through his means she was enabled to send the following request to Talleyrand, on 8th June, 1800 :

" I have fought the good fight ; I am 73 years of age, have a sabre cut on the head, have had a leg broken and two bayonet wounds. In 1756, I greatly contributed towards the reunion of France and Russia. In 1762 and 1763, I successfully laboured day and night at the great work of making peace between France and England. I was in direct and secret correspondence with Louis XV from 1756 to the time of his death. I make no mention of what else I have done for my country. My head belongs to the War Department, my heart to France, and my gratitude to Citizen Charles Max Talleyrand, the worthy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who will do me justice. He will not suffer me to perish of hunger and despair. . . ."

[1] Mrs. Cole, who was French by birth, was the widow of an officer in the navy. She was very poor, and was obliged to sell what few jewels she possessed in order to maintain her friend. Gaillardet, who always prefers the improbable, states that the woman who supported the Chevalier during his last years was not Mrs. Cole, but Nordege Stein, who had met d'Éon in Russia nearly fifty years previously. By what chance the ex-Maid of Honour of the Empress Elizabeth came to be in England, he does not explain.

The only reply she received was a safe-conduct, authorizing her to return to France, and dated 18 Brumaire. She was described in this document as born at Tonnerre, aged 76, hair and eyebrows grey, high forehead, ordinary nose, large chin, and oval face.

Want and ill-health prevented her from making use of this permission ; but in spite of all difficulties, her spirits were good, and she bore her troubles uncomplainingly. In a letter written to Citizeness Cheminot, she speaks of her own sad situation, of the events of the day, and the troubles of her friends.

" I am still very grieved at the serious illness of our good friend, Mrs. Cole, our fellow countrywoman who, a few days after your departure, was taken ill with inflammation of the lungs. . . . Poor Mrs. Cole is much better during the last few days. It is quite natural that I should nurse her, for she nursed me during three years when I was ill in bed, or else confined to my room. Mrs. Cole and I talk ten times a day about Madame de Cheminot, the good Baroness, and our dear Sister Modeste.

" I am very vexed to hear of the illness of my good and brave friend, de Morgues. I hope that he will come and see you when he is convalescent, for I have always counted upon the candour of his mind, the penetration of his intellect, and the sincere friendship that he has always shown me both in speaking and writing. I will certainly not forget the advice you give me. I shall have time whilst

Mrs. Cole is getting better, and I will open a correspondence with him which will greatly aid my speedy return, if it passes through the channel of my good intelligent friend, Madame de Cheminot. She will be completely able to heal and dry up my wounds with the help of the prudent, honest, beneficent, and profound Citizen Maret, who has so much influence with the All-Powerfu Bonaparte, that hero of France, Italy, Egypt, and Europe, who has made mercy reign through justice in ancient and modern Gaul, and has brought all the world to reason by the force of his arguments and of that *Canon* Law which speaks like St. John Chrysostom of the golden mouth, with open lips vomiting forth fire, iron, and death; who establishes the free will of nature as the first bequest to man; which he holds direct from God in the liberty which he has acquired through Jesus Christ, as is said by Paul, prince of apostles to the Gentiles, and Roman citizen, and the only one of the evangelists who writes like a gentleman!"

Speaking about England, she adds:

"It is a country which can only be inhabited by 'Milord Sterling' and 'Milady Guinea,' and as I am neither gold nor silver, I will quickly return and embrace Madame de Cheminot.

"(Signed) CITOYENNE D'ÉON.

"16th January, 1802."

(From a letter in the private collection of M. Fromageot.)

The last eight years of her life were spent in London, in profound poverty. The ex-captain of dragoons and Mrs. Cole were sometimes compelled to do needlework to earn a few pence for food. During the last two years, she was bedridden and endured atrocious suffering. Mrs. Cole nursed her with untiring devotion, and up to the last moment of her life, never suspected her real sex. When, on 21st May, 1810, la Chevalière drew her last breath, the astonishment of her old friend was great.

On 23rd May, 1810, a post-mortem examination of the body was made in the presence of Lord Yarborough, Sir Sidney Smith, the Hon. Mr. Lyttelton, Father Elysée, and several medical men. The following paragraph appeared in *The Times* on 25th May.

"I hereby certify that I have inspected and dissected the body of Chevalier d'Éon, in the presence of Mr. Adair, Mr. Wilson and Father Elysée, and that I found the male organs perfectly formed and normal in every respect.

"(Signed) COPELAND, Surgeon.

"Golden Square,

"23rd May, 1810."

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE CHEVALIER D'ÉON

The best authority, in English, regarding the life of the Chevalier d'Eon is a short, but very informative essay by the late Mr. Andrew Lang included in

his book of *Historical Mysteries* (pp. 294–315). There is also *The Strange Career of the Chevalier d'Éon*, by Captain J. Buchan Telfer, R.N. (1885), but that book has long been out of print, and was of no great historical value when it existed, for the Captain (it is said by those who have read the book), was too prone to accept as truths d'Eon's statements concerning himself, and many of them will not bear critical examination.

For d'Éon was "a measureless liar," and one of the worst sort. A man, whose life has been for many years an acted lie, is not likely to feel any compunction about speaking or writing lies; indeed they are necessary adjuncts to the make-up, and as a matter of fact, the Chevalier excelled in all three varieties of mendacity; the open and palpable lie; the statement which is unsupported by evidence but which it is difficult to *prove* as untrue; and thirdly, the additions, or as the Duc de Broglie (*Le Secret du Roi*) prefers to call them the "interpolations" which d'Eon inserted in many of the documents he transcribed.

Of the second class, the first example that we find is the visit of d'Éon to Russia in 1755. He accompanied a mysterious person called the Chevalier Douglas, of whom nothing certain is known. Captain Telfer says that he was a Mackenzie, and M. Gilbert calls him the Chevalier Mackenzie Douglas. He was a Jesuit and a Jacobite, which were possibly recommendations in the eyes of Louis XV, though they would not have been to

other people. D'Éon either started with him—or joined him on the road according to Captain Buchan Telfer—dressed in female apparel. Did Louis foresee that Douglas would fail, but that d'Éon would manage to get admittance to the Empress? He did not usually display such perspicacity.

There is no mention of this mission in the records of the French Foreign Office, and M. Gilbert says this is accounted for by the fact that it was a secret pact. But in that case, the so-called treaty would have been no more than an agreement between Elizabeth and Louis XV, liable to terminate whenever it suited the convenience of either party. D'Éon was certainly of opinion that it was much more than that, as he continued for many years to call Heaven and Versailles to witness that he had done the State some service in concluding a treaty between France and Russia.

Mr. Lang has pointed out, with his usual critical acumen, some of the discrepancies in the Chevalier's story.

"Sometimes in his vast MSS., d'Éon declares that he went to Russia disguised in 1755. But he represents himself as then aged twenty, whereas he was really twenty-seven, and this he does in 1773, before he made up his mind to pose for life as a woman. He had a running claim against the French Government for the expenses of his first journey to Russia. This voyage, in 1776, he dates in 1755, but in 1763, in an official letter, he dates

his journey to Russia, of which the expenses were not repaid, in 1756. That is the true chronology. Nobody denies that he did visit Russia in 1756, attired as a male diplomatist, but few now believe that in 1755 he accompanied Douglas as that gentleman's pleasing young niece."

. . . . . .

During his short military career d'Éon distinguished himself—for he was not lacking in courage—and was "mentioned" in despatches for "executing in the presence and under the fire of the enemy, the dangerous duty of the removal of gunpowder and other property of the King." D'Éon's own account is that he drove the Highlanders back to the English camp, after having "dislodged them from a gorge of the mountains at Einbeck." Marshal de Broglie makes no allusion to this, and Mr. Lang thinks it was one of the Chevalier's usual "interpolations." But brushes with the enemy were of frequent occurrence, and de Broglie may have been alluding to one affair and d'Éon to another; so we may give the Chevalier the benefit of the doubt; all the more readily because there are so many occasions on which we cannot accord him that advantage.

. . . . . .

Into the complexities which beset d'Éon's diplomatic career we cannot enter without swelling this note to the dimensions of a pamphlet; they are treated of as clearly as is perhaps possible in the

book. We should have to begin with trying to understand "the incredibly foolish" system of Louis XV's "secret," which consisted in giving one set of orders to his ambassadors whilst he was at the same time instructing secret agents to carry out a diametrically opposite policy. It was a course of conduct which was certain—in the words of Mrs. Lirriper—to "breed fruitful hot water for all parties," and that was probably why Louis adopted it. He has been described as "the most unamusable of men," and it tickled his jaded senses to befool his Ministers, deceive his inquisitive mistress, Madame de Pompadour, and make believe to be a professional plotter with all the childish paraphernalia of a jargon of false names, documents hidden in snuff-boxes with false bottoms, etc. The amusement was expensive, but as Jacques Bonhomme paid for it that was a matter of no moment. There was also the certainty of being "blackmailed" by some of these secret agents.

D'Éon may not have been the only one to try to make his employer pay through the nose for more or less valuable papers, but so far as we know, he was the only one to meet with any success. That success would have been greater if the Chevalier had not been vain and ambitious, which are two bad assets for a blackmailer.

. . . . . .

Another blackmailer, named De Morande, had written an atrocious libel on Madame du Barry.

He did not publish the book, but took care to let Louis XV know that he would sell the right of "non-publication" for a valuable consideration. He had taken refuge in England, and Louis, on the principle of "set a thief to catch a thief," asked d'Éon to make terms with him. But before matters could be arranged, the affair was taken out of the hands of the Chevalier and entrusted to another man. M. Gilbert thinks this was because d'Éon was attached to the Duc de Choiseul, and du Barry hated de Choiseul, and therefore refused to be "beholden" to him for a service rendered.

The biographer of Madame du Barry[1] is of opinion that the real reason lay much nearer the surface. D'Éon claimed £14,000 for "expenses" (which included the mythical journey to Russia) and Louis was rightly of opinion that the money sent to him to purchase de Morande's silence would never get further than his own pocket. He therefore employed another emissary—who, by the way, *did* abscond with the money entrusted to him—and the affair was finally settled by the Chevalier de Norac—who was no other than our old friend Caron de Beaumarchais—"Norac" being Caron spelled backwards.

[1] *The Life and Times of Madame du Barry*, by Robert B. Douglas. London, 1896.

JENNY DE SAVALETTE DE LANGE

(?1786–1858)

CHAPTER XII

(?1786–1822)

Lack of information regarding the life of Mademoiselle Jenny de Savalette de Lange—Her history as related by Comtesse Dash —Another version by M. G. Lenôtre—Jenny as a governess—Pensioned during the Empire—Petitions at the Restoration—Jenny at the Abbaye-aux-Bois—Projected marriage with M. de Lazeverne—A notarial act—The engagement broken off—Several other breaches of promise—Portrait of Mademoiselle de Savalette de Lange.

A PERSON who throughout the whole of her life had been known as Mademoiselle Jenny Savalette de Lange, died at Versailles on 6th May, 1858; and when the nurse proceeded to lay out the corpse, it was discovered that the supposed woman was in reality a man.

We are bound to confess that we know very little concerning Jenny de Savalette de Lange, except the bare fact that she always lived as a woman and no one ever suspected her real sex.

On 7th November, 1820, seven respectable persons appeared before the *juge de paix* of the First Arrondissement, and declared on oath that they were acquainted with Mademoiselle Savalette de Lange; and she stated, on her own behalf, that she was the illegitimate daughter of Charles Pierre Paul Savalette

Delange, deceased, but that she did not know the name of her mother, nor where she was born, and for that reason was unable to produce any birth certificate.

There is therefore very little documentary evidence concerning this "new Chevalière d'Éon," as the *Journal de Seine-et-Oise* called her, and for that very reason, writers who have interested themselves in her case have been able to make the most astonishing statements about her without any fear of contradiction. Comtesse Dash, in the first volume of *Memoires des Autres*, writes :[1]

"Mlle. de . . . was an only daughter, and inherited all the papers which belonged to her father, and which contained proofs of great services rendered to the House of Bourbon. After her death these papers were collected and examined to try and discover how this man had become possessed of all the papers belonging to Mlle. de . . . and knew her so well that he was able to assume and maintain her identity. There are five or six versions of the history, but the one that is most likely is the one I am going to narrate. It seems to be supported by probabilities which are almost proofs.

"This man had been the confidential servant of

[1] "Comtesse Dash" was the pen-name of Gabrielle Anne de Cisterne de Courtiras, Comtesse de Poilow de Saint-Mars (1804–72). She was the author of many "society novels," which have not stood the test of time, though they were not without merit ; and also of the volume of anecdotes mentioned above. (Translator.)

M. de . . . He knew the family and their connections, and was aware they had no relations living, and that after the death of father and daughter, the family would be extinct. He accompanied them when they emigrated. Comte de . . . died. He remained along with the daughter, gained her confidence, and murdered her for the sake of these documents. But the documents would be useless to him if he could not pass himself off as Mlle. de . . . herself. He went to another town and dressed as a woman. This he could easily do, as he was young, of small stature, and what little beard he had was blond. Having made the metamorphosis, he sought to turn it to his profit. He wrote to everybody he could think of asking their assistance, and dwelling upon the services his father had rendered, and so obtained as much money as he needed. It was a poor sort of existence, no doubt, but it was a good deal for a lackey."

At the time of the emigration, the real Mademoiselle de Lange was six or seven years old, and it is difficult to see how her father's confidential servant could pass himself off as a child of that age. After the father's death, did he continue to act as confidential servant to the little girl? There are other difficulties, but the one most fatal to the hypothesis of Comtesse Dash is the fact that Comte de Lange was not an *émigré*.

According to public rumour, which some authors have accepted, the supposed woman was no other

than Louis XVII, who had made his escape from the Temple prison.

M. Charles Nauroy has discovered, in the register of the church of St. Roch, the birth certificate of Augustin Charles Théophile, natural son of Charles Pierre Paul Savalette de Langes, administrator of the Royal Treasury, and of Geneviève Louise Hatry, a minor, Rue de Richelieu. A note on the margin of the register states that by a judgment dated 4th April, 1812, the name of de Langes, added to that of the father, has been ordered to be struck out.

This document cannot refer to the pretended Savalette de Lange, for in 1804 she would have been fourteen years old, and there are two letters in existence, one of which, dated 14 Frimaire, year XIII (15th December, 1804), is addressed to "Mlle. Savalette, No. 281, Rue des Vieux Augustins, Paris," and requests her to call on the morrow, or the day following, between 8 and 10, at No. 4, Rue Cerutty, on a matter of business concerning her."[1]

The second, dated 8 Messidor, year XII (27th June, 1804), runs as follows:

"To Mademoiselle Jenny Savalette, this 8 Messidor, year 12.

"I did not dare, my dear friend, to bring you your veil myself, but I intended to send it back this morning; I am very sorry to have kept you waiting. It returns to its mistress covered with a thousand

[1] Amongst the papers found after the decease of Mlle. Savalette de Lange.

kisses, which I almost believed I was giving to her I love.

"I shall be this evening, at eight o'clock precisely, seated on the Boulevard, between the Rue Montmartre and the Rue du Sentier—the place where you saw my uncle the other night—and we can go from there wherever you may command.

"Adieu, my dear, dear friend, I cannot say more at present. I kiss you as I love you.

"(Signed) J. D."

It does not seem likely that a young girl of fourteen should have received such letters; but if Jenny was born in 1786, she would have been eighteen in 1804, and a correspondence of the nature quoted above would have been far less improbable; but to which Mademoiselle Savalette de Lange did J. D. write—the real one or the false?

For if the real Jenny did disappear, and an impostor took her place, this substitution must have occurred somewhere between 1804 and 1812; a period during which we have no information concerning her.

We learn from M. Alfred Begis (*Correspondance historique et archéologique*, Vol. 7) that Jenny was present at a ball given by the Austrian Ambassador in honour of Marie Louise, on 18th July, 1810. How could a man suddenly take the place of a young lady well known in society without the fraud being discovered? It seems utterly incredible, unless the man had known Mademoiselle de Savalette from

childhood, and had carefully studied her habits and manners.

M. G. Lenôtre[1] is very much inclined to credit the version given by Comtesse Dash, but he has added one or two fresh characters to the comedy or drama. According to his account, Charles Pierre Paul Savalette de Lange resolved to emigrate during the revolutionary troubles, and started off for Brittany, accompanied by his daughter Jenny. At Orleans, they made the acquaintance of an elegant and plausible young man, whom M. Lenôtre designates by the initial B.

This young man pretended that he knew Brittany well, and offered to act as *cicerone* to the Comte and his daughter. At St. Malo, the trio met a young lady whose name ended with a C, and who appears in M. Lenôtre's story as Mademoiselle Jeanne Françoise de . . . c, and who was accompanied by an old servant named Robin, to whose care she had been committed, with orders to bring her safely to Plymouth, where her father and mother awaited her.

B. took the command of this little troop, and arranged with the captain of a foreign vessel that he should take the whole party to Plymouth. They never arrived there, for no sooner were they out at sea than the captain informed them that he was bound for Hamburg, and had no intention of calling at Plymouth. Everybody acquiesced in this change of route, with the exception of old Robin, who was

[1] *Le Temps*, 29th March, 1900. Article reprinted in *Vieilles Maisons, vieux papiers*.

so grieved that he was unable to fulfil the promise made to the parents of Mlle. . . . c, that he died of "an attack of hot fever" three days after he arrived at Hamburg.

It devolved therefore upon B. to let the father and mother of Mlle. . . . c know where their daughter was. He wrote to them, but he never had any reply. Some months passed, and the little band was at the end of their resources. Comte de Savalette, having nothing to live on, died of "a putrid fever." Jenny wrote to Comte d'Artois to remind him of the money her father had lent him; but her appeal fell on deaf ears. Disappointment, and perhaps starvation, put an end to her life and she died. B. inherited her claims, which was all that there was to inherit, and wrote begging letters in her name, but without any success. Mlle. . . . c eventually became the mistress of B., and the two lived together until the revolutionary storm had passed away and the *émigrés* were enabled to return to France.

When that time came, the parents or other relations of Mlle. . . . c found her and took her home. As for B., he had disappeared. Mlle. . . . c, being ashamed of the life she had been leading, did not tell her relatives all her adventures. She lived a quiet and retired life till 1810, when a certain Comte de R. fell in love with her and married her. She and her husband went to live in the Rue de la P . . ., in the Marais quarter. One day, in 1815, she received a visit from a tall gaunt female with

her hair done in plain bands, and her face closely veiled. Her appearance was unassuming, although she wore a gaudily trimmed bonnet with large strings.

When she was alone with Madame de R., she raised her veil, and disclosed the features of B. "I am your old friend of the time of the emigration —Jenny Savalette de Langes," he said. He then explained to his former mistress, that he wanted to use that name in order to screw money out of the Royal family, but in order to do that he needed the help of Mme. de R., who could certify as to "her" identity. "The unfortunate woman felt herself lost (adds M. Lenôtre), she bowed her head, and to save the honour of the name she bore, she promised to aid him in his designs."

Thanks to the influence he had gained over her by the use of this odious kind of blackmail, B. was able to play the part he had assumed until Mme. de R., worn-out by moral torture, confessed the truth to her husband. B. saw that he was unmasked, took fright, and hid himself at Versailles, where he remained still as Jenny de Savalette, until his death disclosed his real sex.

It must be confessed that the story, as thus told, makes a very good drama, but it can hardly pretend to a claim to be regarded as a true history. There are two great faults, the one being that the tale is from beginning to end highly improbable; and the other, that it is not supported by the slightest proof.

M. G. Lenôtre has discovered the identity of Mlle. de . . . c, she was Mlle de Tinteniac, who in

1810, married Comte de Saint Roman. But the name of Saint Roman does not figure until very late amongst the names of the persons who supported the claims of Mlle. de Savalette ; and amongst the witnesses as to her identity it does not appear at all.

This makes it seem impossible that, during her supposed emigration, Mlle. de Tinteniac had played the part M. Lenôtre ascribes to her.

On the other hand, M. Lenôtre states that Jenny was not the daughter of Comte Paul, but was the daughter of one of his brothers, or one of his cousins. In an article in *La Correspondance historique, etc.* (March, 1900, Vol. 7, p. 73 ff.), M. Alfred Begis has shown that the brother of Comte Paul Savalette died whilst still a child.

If Jenny was only a niece or cousin, it is difficult to see how she could have intruded herself into the family of Comte Paul de Savalette without such a claim being denied by the Comte's other children. As a matter of fact, none of the direct or collateral descendants of Comte Paul ever contested her right to bear the name of Savalette de Lange.[1]

[1] Charles Pierre Paul Savalette de Lange was never married, but he had a liaison with Genèvieve Louise Hatry (born 1767) by whom he had four illegitimate children, viz. :

1. Auguste Charles Théophile Savalette, born 14th May, 1790, died 1st November, 1865.
2. Ange Louis Dieudonné Savalette, born 17th February, 1792, died 22nd July, 1832.
3. Louise Lony Savalette, born in 1795, married Antoine Desbœuf, sculptor, and died 5th October, 1871.
4. Isidore Paulin Savalette, born 4th July, 1797, died 9th May, 1860.

Their mother died at Neuilly-sur-Seine, 6th August, 1832. Information derived from article previously mentioned in the text.

It has also been asserted that Jenny was not the daughter of Mlle. Hatry, but was the fruit of a previous liaison which Comte Paul de Savalette de Lange had with Madame de Granville.

Early in 1812, Mlle. de Savalette appears to have been looking for a situation as governess. She was a protégée of Mme. de Bourbonne, who perhaps recommended her to Mme. de Sommesnil. There is a letter extant, dated 23rd February, 1812, from a certain Abbé de la Myre, who was no doubt the steward or business man of Mme. de Sommesnil, confirming her engagement as governess, directing her to leave Paris on 3rd March, and enclosing a sum of money for the purchase of dresses and hats.

The same day she received from Baron Pasquier, the prefect of police, a passport to permit "Mlle. Desavalette (Henriette Jenny), profession, proprietor, native of Paris," to make a journey from Paris to Rouen. The description given in this document is "Age 26 years, height one metre sixty-eight centimetres (5 feet 6 in.), brown hair, medium-sized forehead, brown eyebrows, brown eyes, nose and mouth average sized, round chin, oval face, ordinary complexion." The passport is signed "Genny de Savalette."

From the little we know of Jenny's character, we should infer that she was very far from being an amiable person, and certainly very ill-fitted to be a governess. We are therefore not surprised to learn that she was back in Paris in July of the same year,

when we find her living at a *maison des bains* in the Rue Taranne.[1]

Though not rich, she was by no means penniless, for in addition to what she got out of Mme. de Bourbonne, she was also in receipt of a pension from the Emperor, as is shown by a letter dated 1st July, 1812, in which she is informed that her pension has not been suppressed, but that her name still figures on the list of M. de Stadler, chief secretary to the Grand Almoner.

As the chief asset in the budget of Mlle. Savalette de Lange was the claim she had on the Bourbons for services rendered to the royal house by her father and grandfather, it seems passing strange that Napoleon should have granted her a pension. There must have been some private intimacy with the Bonaparte family, for an English friend of hers—Mrs. Butler of Brentwood—writes to her during the Presidency of Louis Napoleon :

"I often think of you, and greatly wish that the President would increase your pension. Has Louis Bonaparte proved a friend to you? I cherished the hope that he would think of you on account of your old friendship. . . ." In another letter dated 7th January, 1851, the same correspondent writes, "I had hoped that the President would be your

[1] Rue Taranne disappeared when Boulevard St. Germain and Rue de Rennes were lengthened in 1866. Diderot lived at No. 2, and his statue, at the corner of Rue de Rennes, marks the site of his residence. (Translator.)

friend; he has but to know you and hear you to serve you willingly."

At the fall of the Empire, the pension ceased, but as soon as the King was restored to the throne, Jenny bombarded him with petitions in which she stated all the services rendered to the royal family by M. de Savalette. In one of these petitions, she states that Comte d'Artois owed her parents frs. 6,450 13 c., and that these advances led to the arrest of her father during the Terror, and he very narrowly escaped the scaffold; and when he came out of prison, found his affairs in great confusion. "And that after his release, his request to the Government for payment was refused, so far as the interest to which he had a right, was concerned, and the principal recognized as due by a judgment of 25 Fructidor, year IV, was paid in notes which had greatly depreciated in value."

To draw up these petitions, Mlle. de Savalette had recourse to the aid of M. Louis du Bois-du-Brais, with whose family she was acquainted, and who remained her friend during many years.

In 1814, she sent a private request for repayment to Comte d'Artois, and renewed the application in June, 1821, but without any success on either occasion. How she became possessed of the papers which enabled her to make these demands, and to obtain from both Louis XVIII and Charles X pensions to reward the services rendered by her

supposed father or herself, is a question to which we have no reply. From a legal point of view she had no claim whatever, being illegitimate, and not having been recognized as a natural child by Comte Savalette de Lange. She could only appeal to the compassion of her royal debtors, and even for that must have furnished some proofs that she was really the daughter of Savalette de Lange. How she managed, with such slight evidence as she had, to obtain not only pensions but an acknowledgment of indebtedness from Louis XVIII and Charles X still remains a mystery.

Early in 1815, Jenny received a gift of 600 francs from the Duchesse d'Angoulême, followed by a pension from the same source, which continued until 1830. In 1823, Comte d'Artois sent her 500 francs, but on the condition that "Mlle. de Lange should retire to a convent, and should have taken up her abode there before the winter began." She also received on 4th December, 1815, a letter informing her that Louis XVIII had granted her a pension of 300 francs, to commence from 1st October, 1815. But she was required to furnish "an authentic copy of her birth certificate; that document being indispensable." Jenny got out of this difficulty by appealing to M. de Vernon.

Madame de Vernon writes to her on 16th December:

"M. de Vernon saw M. Peronnet yesterday and told him that you were baptized at a place a long

way off, and therefore could not obtain a copy of the certificate of baptism. He replied that the Abbess must give a signed declaration that you were an inmate of the convent. There must also be a declaration from Mme. Leclerc, or some one else who knows you well, and whom you may choose, and M. de Vernon will add his own signature. You must also add a life certificate, and then you will have no further difficulty in touching your small pension.

"Receive the assurances, Mademoiselle, etc. etc.

"DAMPIERRE DE VERNON."

A "life certificate" was issued on 19th December, 1815, by the Mayor of the Tenth Arrondissement to "Mlle. Jenny de Savalette de Lange, granddaughter of Monsieur de Savalette, formerly guardian of the Royal Treasury."

A few months later—in April, 1816—she was informed that, in consideration of her position and of the services rendered by her family, Louis XVIII had allowed her, from his privy purse, an annual sum of 500 francs in addition to her previous pension. With these two pensions and the one from the Duchesse d'Angoulême, Jenny was enabled to pay for her board at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, where she lived from 1815 to 1820.

During the Revolution, the Abbaye-aux-Bois was used as a prison, but in quieter times again became a convent. It had other inmates besides the nuns, for it was also a kind of boarding-house for ladies of

fashion. Madame de Recamier lived there from 1814, and her *salon* was frequented by the best society. Mlle. Jenny de Savalette also saw a good deal of company, and did not lead the life of a recluse. She seems to have left the convent whenever she liked, and on one occasion, in 1818, was absent for several months; her state of health requiring, she said, a long stay in the country. At the end of that time she returned to the convent and continued to receive many visitors; but in 1820, she took another leave of absence, and when she wrote to say she was coming back, was informed that Madame de Recamier, who had made herself the "boss" of the convent, objected to her return. The real reason was that Jenny, by her disagreeable character, had become so thoroughly disliked by everyone that they were glad of an excuse to get rid of her. She was, it was said, a woman (for no one appears to have entertained the slightest doubt as to her sex) that it was very "difficult" to live with.

After leaving the Abbaye-aux-Bois, Mlle. de Savalette de Lange became engaged to be married to M. le Frotter de Lazeverne. The Marquise de Vernon—being a matchmaker, as every true woman is—"occupied herself with the arrangements for the marriage," and by the advice of her lawyer, had a notarial act drawn up to supply the place of the missing birth certificate.

This notarial act was signed on 7th November, 1820, and presented to the Civil Tribunal of First Instance of the Department of the Seine. Seven

witnesses, including Marquis de Vernon, all declared on oath that they knew Demoiselle Jenny Savalette to be the person she asserted herself to be, and the Court in a judgment which contained half a dozen "*vus*" and as many "*attendus*," ordered and decreed that the notarial act should be accepted as equivalent to a birth certificate.[1]

The pretended engagement to marry M. de Lazeverne was, of course, invented solely for the purpose of getting a legal instrument which should serve to establish her identity, and could be used instead of the missing birth certificate, which was always being demanded and was never forthcoming. Having obtained this valuable document, her next step was to find a pretext for a quarrel with her lover. How she cunningly contrived to lay all the blame of the rupture on his shoulders is shown in the following letter :

"MONSIEUR,

"When we met at the house of Princesse de P . . ., you showed an incredible indifference. You hardly addressed a single word to me. How can you make such conduct agree with the fine promises of friendship you made ? And the fidelity that you swore ! What can I think except that it is too evident that another has found a place in your heart and affection. I saw perfectly well, that during supper time, you were paying all sorts of attentions

[1] The Procureur du Roi at first refused to "homologate" this judgment, but Jenny obtained a *mandamus*, or the French equivalent thereto, and he was compelled to withdraw his opposition.

and kindnesses to your neighbour, a little fair woman, who had no doubt captivated you by her elegant figure, and a face which is perhaps rather prettier than mine. I fully expect you to tell me that all that was done in mere fun, just to tease me, but I will not accept that excuse. I have taken the matter to heart. Henceforward, it will be useless for you to continue to pay your addresses to me. I shall not revoke my decision, and I definitely renounce all ideas of marrying you.

"JENNY S. DE LANGE."[1]

It should be added, however, that her conscience smote her for having played a faithful lover such a scurvy trick, and she used such influence as she had at Court to get a good berth for her ex-fiancé.

. . . . . .

We have already remarked, in speaking of the early childhood of Abbé de Choisy, that persons who are psychically prone to feminism, display a most inordinate desire to appear to be a woman.

In the case of Jenny de Savalette de Lange, it is practically impossible to determine whether she was forced to adopt a woman's dress, or whether she assumed it of her own free-will; but there are reasons for believing that circumstances rather than inclination induced her to deny her true sex. But we may readily believe that she came to sustain the character so well that she ended by liking the part.

[1] Quoted from Herail, *Notice sur l'Homme-Femme*. Versailles, 1859, 8vo., pp. 62–64.

We agree too with some of her biographers that the disguise assisted her in a hundred ways to satisfy her avarice—"a good old-gentlemanly vice" to which she was too much addicted.[1] But if it had been really repugnant to her feelings to suffer the thousand and one restraints which manners, customs, and the laws of those days imposed upon women who had any self-respect, she would have found some means of casting off the yoke which her borrowed sex imposed upon her; yet we find no trace that she had made any effort in that direction; on the contrary, she was always trying, or pretending to try, to find a husband. We do not understand the condition of semi-slavery in which she lived, and perhaps her "engagements" gave her a joy which our well-regulated minds fail to comprehend.

At any rate, her projected marriage with M. de Lazeverne was followed by several other adventures of the same sort. In 1816, we find her engaged to M. Albert de T . . ., of the King's Bodyguard; the correspondence between the two lovers is rather racy. "Remember, I conjure you, dear friend," he writes, "what you have promised me. Tell me that it will be possible for you to love me." And in another letter of 25th December, 1816, "Thursday last, I looked for you everywhere: I lost sight of you and could not find you again. I had hoped to waltz with you, which is, as you know, one of my

[1] She did quite a large business in rendering services to her friends, borrowing money from one in order to lend it to another, though no doubt she charged a small commission on the transaction.

happinesses, and to hear from your lips that which you wish to write to me."

Also this from a tender and ardent lover, "Be assured, dear friend, that your wishes will be always commands to me, and that however much it may cost me, I shall know how to restrain myself until the happy moment when you will at last consent to our union."

How Albert de T . . . was choked off, we do not know. He was succeeded by a Monsieur V. of the Commissariat Department. We have only one of his letters, in which he says, "Under these circumstances, shall I again speak of the projected marriage which I previously mentioned? And what reply do you intend to give me, now that you have had time to well reflect?" . . .

The next suitor was Monsieur M. N., captain in a cavalry regiment. This engagement differed somewhat from the others inasmuch as it was the captain, and not Jenny, who was the first to back out of the affair. He writes to her:

"I have, however, a very painful confession to make to you, my dear Jenny, and that is that I find myself forced to renounce for the future the pleasure of seeing you; and this, of course, puts an end to our projected marriage. There are a thousand reasons, that I dare not mention to anyone, which lead me, in spite of myself, to make this great sacrifice. Yes, my Jenny, you can fully believe what grief I feel in separating from you. . . . I want,

before leaving this hateful city, to once more see my dear Jenny, press her in my arms and swear to her an eternal friendship.

"Adieu, Jenny, adieu."

Another lover, M. Delpy de Lacipière, had plenty of time in which to endure the caprices and ill-humours of Mlle. Savalette de Lange. He was an officer in the Paris garrison, and for fifteen years was the indefatigable suitor of the hot-tempered Jenny.

The idyll began in 1822—soon after her rupture with M. de Lazeverne—at a time when the officer was hard up. Jenny appears to have offered to lend or give him money, for on 23rd March, 1823, he writes to thank her for her good intentions, but he feels scruples of delicacy in accepting money from a woman. Two days later, he assures her that he "did not refuse through pride." But the lady insisted, and he ended by accepting the aid she offered. Having thus put him under an obligation to her, she rebaited the "matrimonial trap," and de Lacipière was caught. He found it difficult to resist such letters as the following:

"I'm really grieved that you keep aloof from me. What pleasure can you take in rendering me the most wretched of women? Did you at least think of me, and were our hearts and thoughts in harmony? Ah! say to yourself every moment, 'She loves me; she regrets me!' My sole friend

I have not to reproach myself with passing a single instant of my life in which you are not my only thought, my only feeling. All the rest is nothing to me—merely subsidiary, and often tiresome, thoughts and feelings. Shall I see you this evening? But not at your lodgings: I am too ill. Come to me, dear friend, I implore you, and do not condemn me to the torture of suffering and dying apart from you. You will pity the condition of your sweetheart. Ah! you are the sole recompense for all the afflictions that I bear; my only welfare, my only hope, and the sole object of all the affection of my soul. Do not refuse me the consolation that I expect from you. Adieu! I love you more than I can tell you. Language has bounds, but feeling has not, and it is a torment to me not to be able to express what I feel, but that is not the only thing. Ah! I believe that I shall succeed in making you understand. Adieu again! Love and pity your unhappy friend,

"GENNY DE SAVALETTE."

His regiment being ordered to Besançon, M. de Lacipière writes effusive epistles from there to his lady-love. From Besançon, he was ordered to Corsica, and his letters grew warmer the farther he was from Paris. On 13th March, 1825, he thanks her for the efforts she has made to obtain the Cross of the Legion of Honour for him. She, on her part, keeps on worrying him to marry her, although she knows that such a marriage is

impossible. He writes to her on 27th November, 1825.

" Moreover, if I decide to marry at once, it would only be in the hopes of quitting the army, of which I am thoroughly tired. But what should I do in case I became your husband ? Your resources will not suffice for both."

The situation was becoming strained, and very soon a storm of insults and abuse broke over the head of the unfortunate officer. Yet even this did not put a stop to his infatuation, and the correspondence between this ill-assorted couple lasted five years longer—1826 to 1831. Their letters were of all kinds, ranging from the ultra-affectionate to the furiously abusive, and passing through the intermediate stages of *persiflage*, coolness, sarcasm and disdain. Early in 1831, there was a rupture between the lovers, caused by money matters, but the quarrel was patched up somehow, for by the end of the year the engagement had once more been renewed ; and to prove that he meant business, the poor deluded man authorized his " promised spouse " to " put up the banns."

This was the signal for Jenny to put an end to a farce she had carried on for many years. She replied by demanding immediate repayment of all the sums she had lent him. Presumably, she never was paid, for the regiment was ordered to Africa. The last letter in this strange correspondence is from him, and is dated from Oran, 20th September, 1836. In

it he reproached Mlle. Savalette de Lange with having claimed more than he really owed her. After that, he came to the conclusion that the only way to wring the heart of his ex-fiancée and inexorable creditor was to die—which he accordingly did.

It is plausible to suppose that a man who for more than half a century was able to pass himself off as a woman, without being once detected, or even suspected, and who was able to get engaged to half a dozen different lovers, must have had considerable personal attractions, and looked not only like a woman, but a pretty woman. We have no painting or engraving of her, but we have a description which is far from flattering, and may have been penned by one of her discarded suitors. She was, he says :

" Tall, thin, lopsided, and leant on an umbrella ; her features were hard, her look stern, and her voice shrill and cracked. She wore a dress that dated from the Empire or the Restoration, and on her head a black cap surmounted by a broad-brimmed hat. She took snuff frequently, and had such a masculine appearance that people she passed in the street said, ' How much she resembles a man.' "

How can we reconcile this description with the heroine of so many love affairs, who could inspire a poetaster to pour forth her praises in indifferent verse, as in the following sonnet :

To Mademoiselle J. de L. on her poem entitled "Regrets."

Delightful verse you write with ease
About Love's fears and its alarms,
Yet, though you have a thousand charms,
You pay no heed to Love's decrees.
Believe me, dearest—for it is a truth—
The god of happiness is god of love,
And not to love is to have wasted youth.
As when a flower receives not from above
The sun's bright rays, it languishes and dies,
And we have lost the blossom we most prize.
Alas, we both of us have felt Love's smart,
But Time, with healing touch brings consolation;
It heals the wounds inflicted on the heart,
And for past grief affords sweet compensation.

Nought now remains save, for my part,
To offer you my humble adoration.

This is complimentary, but it must be confessed that in the case of the different "men-women" we have been studying, they are not often flattered either by pen or pencil. Yet there must have been something feminine in their appearance or they could not have escaped detection, and it is difficult to believe they were as "mannish" as their detractors would have us believe.

CHAPTER XIII

(1822–1858)

Mlle. de Savalette de Lange employed in the post office—Pensioned by Charles X—Petition to Queen Marie Amélie—Rude behaviour of Mlle. de Savalette de Lange—A curious letter—Jenny as a poetess—Death of Jenny de Savalette de Lange—The counterpane of Louis XIV—The author's confession.

IN May, 1822, Mademoiselle de Savalette de Lange was appointed post-mistress at Poligny (Jura), but she never went there; and in the following year was given a similar position at Villejuif, near Paris, with a salary of 1200 francs; but the state of her health prevented her from accepting the post. As early as 1822, she had begun begging for a lodging in the Château of Versailles. She obtained her wish in 1824, and first lodged in the Rue de la Surintendance, but afterwards removed to the Château, where her address was, "Marble Court, Staircase No. 13, Second Floor, Door No. 66." She remained there till 1832.

The death of Louis XVIII (1824) involved the loss of her pension, but Charles X restored it to her on 1st February, 1825, and even gave her an additional 500 francs a year; but although she now had two pensions of 500 francs each, besides a third from the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and was provided with an

apartment rent free, in the Château of Versailles, Jenny still continued to ask aid from different friends, and also solicited a bureau for the sale of stamped paper—which, however, she did not get.

The Revolution of 1830 reduced her income very considerably, but as soon as quieter days arrive, she hastens to write to Queen Marie Amélie a long supplication :

"MADAME,

"When a number of unfortunate people daily receive the benefits of Your Majesty, is it permitted me to hope that she will deign to receive the petition deposited at her feet by the daughter and granddaughter of Monsieur Savalette de Lange, formerly guardian of the Royal Treasury, and intendant of a province.

"At the return of the august Bourbon family, I explained the claims that I had to a special protection, in consideration of the sacrifice my honoured parents made to the unfortunate Louis XVI in confiding to him their entire fortune (and a very large fortune) to liquidate some debts he had enjoined them to settle, and which he regarded as sacred.

"The Dauphiness, remembering their devotion to the royal family, and knowing my sad position, deigned to grant me a pension. King Charles X also assured me that to provide me with the means of existence, I should receive, as soon as one became vacant, a post as vendor of stamped paper, and in

consequence of this promise, I made an arrangement with Madame Lefèvre, the possessor of the bureau in the Île Saint Louis, who consented to resign in my favour. Late events have deprived me of the honourable protection of the Dauphiness, and the pension which the Princess deigned to grant me, and also of my pension on the civil list.

"Weighed down with infirmities, I am in the most fearful distress. But one pleasing hope sustains my courage: I dare to hope that Her Majesty the Queen will not refuse the august aid of that benevolence to which the unfortunate never appeal in vain, and from which I await the welfare of my existence."

She also wrote to such aristocratic friends as she had to ask them to support her petition. They gave her advice as to her situation—but nothing else so far as we know, and her needs increased, for the Château of Versailles was turned into a museum, and Jenny had to leave her comfortable apartment and take refuge in Paris.

Like many other beggars, she became abusive if those she importuned did not respond to her appeals, and when she did give a loose rein to her scurrility, she expressed herself in terms Thersites might have envied, as witness the following example:

"The time has come when I am going to tear down the veil that covers your infamous iniquities. Truth inspires me. Tremble, eternal sinner, odious to all whom you approach, and whom you poison

with the venom that comes from your corrupted mind. Tremble, I say, lest I exhibit to the society to which you seek to belong, the execrable monster which is approaching it. Yes, execrable; the expression is far from strong enough to depict the horror that you drag behind you. To what height will you carry the callousness of crime, hypocritical sister of Satan! Remember that your disgusting composition may be destroyed at any moment.

"God leaves you yet an hour; profit by it for the salvation of your soul. Leave your filthy slough. But why have I dared to link that holy name with that of a proselyte of hell? Enough! too long it has been profaned by your infernal lips; you have used it too often to hide your infamies! When will you cease, vile filth, to offend nature? Do you not see that all those who surround you begin to guess your hypocrisy? Go! soon you will be avoided as are those venomous animals whose very stench is feared. That divine religion, which you have the shameless impudence to simulate, hurls you far from her; and all her worthy ministers shudder with horror on seeing you approach the sanctuary, and they invoke heaven to turn away the curse which follows you. Present yourself therefore before the tribunal of penitence with a repentant heart. Beware! have pity upon your soul! The hour draws nigh; hell opens before your feet; the demons smile in the hopes of possessing a prey worthy of them. Think of the eternal tortures which await you. Be converted; save yourself;

and leave your neighbour at rest to look after his own salvation. True religion does not consist in tormenting others, but in continual self-humiliation. Cease to utter slanders, thou viper-tongue, for you make yourself hated wherever you are, wherever you came from, and whithersoever you are going.

"Now that I have told you, although feebly (!), the horror with which you inspire me, let me give you some advice as to how you may prolong your cursed existence, in order that you may have time to expel from your heart the infection which gangrenes it, and look after your salvation. Listen and profit by what I say. You are horribly disgusting; the filth which surrounds your hideous body will, ere long, cause the flesh to fall in shreds from your bones. I advise you then to cleanse your body, and your rheumy eyes, your rotten teeth, and your stinking mouth. Adieu, old monster, whom all the demons have vomited upon earth for the sins of mankind.

"Return to Orleans, and sell your cheeses and salad. Adieu, again, old Michel."

After this torrent of vituperation—which must rather have astonished the recipient—we print another curious letter, addressed to we know not whom, which shows us some of the difficulties which environed Jenny's anomalous existence.

"I thought I should never find the time to write to you, and I have so many things to tell you. My friend, your letter did me good, but also hurt me.

I have reread it a hundred times: I know it by heart. Yes, far from the world, and with each other for ever would be perfect happiness; but would it endure? No! In this proposal, which you scarcely dare to entertain, it is you who would make all the sacrifices, and it is therefore for me to refuse them, and should not I be punished thereby? Unhappy man, guilty for me and through me, what would remain to me as consolation? Oh, fear nothing; you make me the arbiter of your fate. I will ask nothing of you that might sully your good name. Love me enough to sacrifice me to a happiness which will bring remorse. I have the courage to free myself, but not by an unceasing combat. I can make a great effort, but I cannot make a fresh one every day. But I have a project in my head. I will go to Normandy at the first opportunity. When there, I will submit and will write, for in a letter one can explain better and more calmly. I swear I will not return unless I am promised entire liberty to act as my age gives me the right to do, and to be treated as a friend and an equal. Or else I will demand a pension and remain with Emilie, who certainly would ask for nothing better. If both courses are rejected, I will threaten to write to my brother, and ask him for this pension, and complain of the slavery in which I am bound. It will be a pressing reason that makes him interfere. Moreover there will be a consultation. I fancy I can see all the family at it. M. Lherbette will consider that the liberty I demand is my due, and will be inclined for

Photo by Dobson Ltd., Liverpool

RISTORI, THE ECCENTRIC VIOLINIST

peace, and it will be so decided I hope, and when I return, I will strictly keep to the terms of the treaty. It is the destiny of my life that is at stake, and that I wish to purchase by a few weeks' absence.

"Tell me, does the project sound reasonable? I spoke about it this morning to Madame Font, and she does not disapprove. The more I think about it, the more I believe that it is the only means to escape from slavery.

"What ought I to do? Ought I to write to Emilie to ask her to give me an opportunity to leave her? Tell me, that the horrible prospect I have before me may clear away, and that the future may at least offer me a hope of seeing you and hearing you. I cannot live thus any longer. At whatever cost it may be, I must shake off the yoke. But what did Mr. F . . . e say? He has made an application for you, and hopes to get you a place that would take you out of Paris. Oh! do not desert me! Remember that I cannot follow you, and that others have that right and will use it. You would leave me—perhaps for years! You would leave me in this family where I breathe nothing but iniquity and jealousy, and I should never see you again who are the only relief to the horrible restraint that I suffer. Promise me! Swear to me to remain. What need have I of liberty if you depart? Oh, reassure me; you don't know what my anxiety has been during the last three days. I have already felt all the torments of your absence, I who thought with terror of being separated from you for one or

two days. I have found a week—even a day—passed without seeing you so long and painful. I should no longer live; no longer breathe. You would not have that, sole object of my affection, of my soul, my only hope, my life! Do not condemn me to the torture of suffering and dying away from you. Your absence is annihilation—is death to me. Your friend made me suffer. How he loves you . . . and how right he is in what he told me."

In her more cheerful moments, Mlle. de Savalette de Lange dropped into verse—of which the most that can be said is that the intention is better than the execution.

TO THE MARQUISE DE —— FOR HER FÊTE

I am near my amiable Louise,
The day brings me a great delight
When'er she dawns upon my sight.
Happy am I to see Louise (*bis*).

Her qualities none fail to trace;—
Kindness, talents, wit, urbanity,
Mildness, affable humanity,—
She's virtue's self, combined with grace (*bis*).

Such zeal she for her friends displays,
Whatever lot to them may fall,
Pleasures or griefs,—she shares them all.
She's friendship's model all men praise (*bis*).

It is both humorous and sad to find her writing about love.

I know my heart shall some time meet
Its conqueror, and on that day
Shall gladly own his gentle sway,
And lay itself before his feet.

Sages may warn us 'gainst Love's pain.
Alas! their teaching is in vain.
Avoid Love's torments—if ye may!

We also find her writing in praise of Folly—perhaps the only trait in common that she had with Erasmus.

FOLLY

Kindly witch, whom we call Folly,
Charming alike to gods and men;
Sport would e'en be melancholy
Without thy presence now and then.
Yours I am, and yours for ever,
Though Love is nice 'tis you I praise;
You make me cheerful, gay and clever
If you enlighten all my days.
Reason, they say, puts Love to sleep
If Folly's gone to where she dwells;
So lovers rest in slumber deep
Until awakened by your bells.

In one of the poems entitled "My Pleasures," Jenny sings of nature, her favourite authors, her memories of childhood, etc., in the humdrum manner of the middle classes of last century, and shows her "sensibility" and sentimentality in verses which are lamentable both in feeling and execution.

Thou charming author, whose prolific Muse
—Like a new Virgil—teaches us to use
The many joys a garden can unfold,
And finds in fields, peace, and the age of gold.
How many times has thy sweet melody
Wafted me to the land of Arcady,
And raised me to the bliss that you have known.

O Muses, if by culpable disdain
I have despised thy gifts, and sought by vain
Desires, ambition ; if I have thee forsworn,
May the zeal now by which I am upborne
Efface that insult ; on your altars I here offer
Such incense as my feeble words can proffer.
Judge me not harshly ; let me always see
My refuge in thy love—thy love in me.

The land where I have passed my childhood's days ;
With what delicious memories it teems—
Its hills, its lawns, its parks, its woods, its streams
E'en in my earliest years, I loved its solitude.

. . . . . .

Little more remains to be said about Jenny Savalette de Lange. She returned to Versailles in 1853, and took up her abode in the Rue du Marché Neuf. It was the last of her lodgings on earth, and she had had many, for she changed her residence so frequently as to suggest a suspicion that she sometimes "shot the moon." In the course of her career, she had occupied fifty different houses : thirty-five in Paris, and fifteen in Versailles. She lived five years at her last address, and died in 1858, after a short illness. Two women, who proceeded to lay out the corpse in the winding-sheet, discovered to their amazement, that the so-called Jenny was a man. They at once informed the Civil Authorities, who sent Dr. Dugué, who certified that "it was not permitted to doubt" that the late Mlle. Jenny Savalette de Lange was of the masculine sex.

The death certificate ran as follows :

" This Thursday, sixth of May, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-eight, hour of noon ; certificate of death of unknown man having borne the names of Henriette-Genny Savalette Delange, bachelor, of no profession, born at (the place of birth cannot be stated) in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety ; died this day at 2 a.m. at his residence, 11 Rue du Marché Neuf, Versailles. The witnesses are Antoine Octave Ramin, registrar of the Police Court, aged 29, residing at No. 9, Rue Satory, Versailles, and Louis Jonquet, linen draper, aged 36, residing at Rue Royale, who have signed with us, Mayor of Versailles, formerly a member of the Legislative Assembly, performing the function of public officer of the *état civil* after being duly read, and the death proved.

" (Signed) JONQUET, RAMIN, REMILLY."

In the inventory of the small but heterogeneous collection of articles belonging to the late Jenny de Savalette de Lange, mention is made of a " magnificent bed-cover in fine old guipure lace, in perfect condition, having belonged to the Royal Family, and with coats of arms, armorial bearings, dolphins and emblems worked in the design." This " magnificent bed-cover " was discovered to have originally been the cover of the bed of Louis XIV, and unique of its kind. At the sale of her effects, it was purchased by the State (see article by De Nolhac, in *Review of Ancient and Modern Art*, 10th November,

1897). How this, *morceau unique* came into the possession of Jenny Savalette de Lange is a mystery she took with her to the grave.

. . . . . .

Of all the different "she-men" (as Charles Lamb would have called them) that we have hitherto studied, Savalette de Lange is the least interesting. We know very little about her life; absolutely nothing about the cause of her disguise, and are not able to form any plausible conjecture.

We have given all the information that is obtainable about Jenny's life, but we have no means of knowing how or why this unknown man assumed the name and the dress of Jenny Savalette de Lange. But we have every reason to believe that Jenny never wore male costume at any time of her life. This "unknown man" could not have played the part of a woman so perfectly if he had not been accustomed to it from his infancy. He must have been brought up and educated as a girl, and when he arrived at man's estate, lacked the inclination, through force of habit, to assume the costume of his sex.

We have already seen in the case of Abbé Choisy, that habits acquired in childhood are difficult to eradicate, and may influence the whole life.

SOME MEN WHO STILL DISGUISE
THEMSELVES AS WOMEN

CHAPTER XIV

Aranka Gyvengy—Chrétienni—Stiv-Hall—Stuart—Julian Eltinge—Fregoli—Bertin — Gyp — Ristori — Nielda — Sergi — Barbette —The difficulties of playing a woman's part—The impression on the public.

IT is scarcely possible to study all the forms of disguise within the limits of a single volume. We should have to go back to Achilles, who lived in the island of Skyros, disguised as a young girl; and mention Heliogabalus, who appointed a senate of courtesans over which he presided, clad in a magnificent robe. We should also have to speak of certain religious sects.

But before closing this short account, we ought to include some mention of the Theatre. Amongst the ancients, women were not allowed to appear on the stage, and all female parts were played by men. In the Papal States; in the time of Shakespeare; and in France, up to the seventeenth century, women did not appear on the boards. Molière confided the parts of duennas and servant girls to actors. The nymphs, dryads, and shepherdesses of the ballets were boys or young men. The first time that "ballet-girls" appeared on the stage was in "The Triumph of Love," by Lulli, performed in 1681.

As regards music, Senesino, Caffarelli, Millico,

Farinelli, Guadagni, Pacchiarotti, Marchesi, and later, Velluti and Crescentini, sang the contralto and soprano parts in all the famous operas.

The appearance of a man in a woman's part is much less frequent in the present day ; but we must not forget the names of Aranka Gyvengy, Chrétienni, Stiv-Hall, Stuart, Julian Eltinge, Fregoli, Bertin, Ristori, Gyp, Nielda, Sergi, and the incomparable Barbette.[1] We do not intend to speak about *castrati*, but of men, who by their voice or their art, had a marvellous aptitude for imitating the female sex.

Of *Aranka Gyvengy*, we know little except that for twenty-three years he sustained the parts of "first singing chamber-maids" at the Buda-Pesth theatre, without any one ever suspecting his real sex.

André Chadourne, in his book on *Café Concerts* (1889), speaks of *Chrétienni*, who "dressed as a *lorette*, performed at the Jardin de Paris, and whose seductive leers were calculated to turn the heads of young men of twenty."

Stiv-Hall will be long remembered as a great *artiste* who was one of the earliest and best imitators of female stars. He is a female Proteus who can

[1] Eliza Edwards, a young English actress who died in 1833, ought also to be included in this list, but the information regarding her did not arrive until too late to be here inserted. Hers appears to have been a clear case of "inversion." She is described as being extremely beautiful ; and the amazement of the women who nursed her during her last illness, was great when they discovered that she was a man. (See *The Annual Register* for 1833.)

SERGI

transform himself into any woman at will. He can imitate the appearance, the gestures, the voice and even the features of singers and actresses so different as Yvette Guilbert, Thèrésa Judic, Sarah Bernhardt, Réjane, Patti, Cléo de Merode, and others. His voice has such an extensive range, and is so supple, that he once proposed to record on phonograph disks imitations of all the principal singers of the day.

Nor is he less remarkable in his imitation of faces and attitudes. Yvette Guilbert he mimics so closely that a complimentary "dresser" once told him he was better than she was; and on another occasion, he found in his dressing-room a handsome present inscribed, "To Yvette Guilbert, from one of her most fervent admirers." The donor had taken the copy for the original.

Even scene-shifters and property men have been taken in, and have been heard to ask, "Where does she come from?" when they see a woman in evening dress emerge from a dressing-room into which no one but a short fat man had entered. There is a hearty roar of laughter when the public realizes that the supposed female "star" is an actor, who neither by his face or build has anything feminine about him.

Stuart, who was a baritone and tenor, as well as a soprano and mezzo-soprano, met with extraordinary success at the Alhambra, Paris.

Julian Eltinge was an undergraduate at an English University, and was one day asked by his comrades

to take the part of *prima donna* in a comic opera entitled "Omero," the actress who was to play the part being seriously ill. He consented, and as he possessed a rich contralto voice, acted naturally, danced well, and was not at all embarrassed by his skirts, was a great success. He adopted the profession, for being a good American, he saw that "there were dollars in it." He played the part of "Miss Simplicity," in which he represented a French *ingénue* with great natural charm; and in a piece called "Fairyland" eclipsed the girls with whom he danced by his lightness and grace. He became exceedingly popular, more especially after the famous Lilian Russell had given him some lessons in the arts of "make-up" and dress.[1]

We never saw Julian Eltinge on the stage, but we have seen two cinema films, which were brought to France a few years ago, and in which he appeared, first as a man, and then as a woman, and can testify that the praise bestowed upon him in *Lectures pour Tous* was in no wise exaggerated.

It is but a just tribute to his art to state that when he was a man, there was nothing feminine about him, nor was there a trace of the male in his personation of a woman. He could not have achieved this complete dual personality without minute and persistent study.

Fregoli can impersonate every class of man or woman, and be "everything in turn and nothing long"; but the principal charm of his entertain-

[1] See *Lectures pour Tous*, 1908.

ment is the rapidity with which he changes his costume, and being a fairly good ventriloquist as well, he can, with the aid of some dummies and stage tricks, create the illusion that there are several persons on the stage at the same time.

These quick changes he effects with the aid of four or five "dressers," who are waiting for him in the wings, and pounce upon him the moment he leaves the stage. Under these circumstances, an elaborate toilette and make-up are impossible, and his portrayal of women are therefore rapid sketches rather than finished studies.

Bertin, who has not appeared on the stage since the war, gave some fairly good imitations of women, but his voice was not suitable, and in singing, he was obliged to make use of disagreeable "head-notes."

Gyp could make up as a woman, so far as outward appearance went, but he could neither sing, act, nor dance.

Ristori, on the contrary, is an exceedingly graceful dancer, which perhaps is to be accounted for by the fact that his father is a ballet-master. He is also a clever violinist, and a gymnast who only dons female attire for the purpose of surprising the audience.

Nielda, who died recently, was able to impersonate women fairly well, and possessed a pleasing contralto voice, but he had no animation in acting.

Sergi was, to all appearance, a tall graceful young woman with a good soprano voice.

Barbette is not a singer but a "wire-walker" and

also performs on the trapeze. He resembles an American girl, and no one suspects him to be a man until, at the end of his performance, he takes off his wig. Amongst acrobats it is no unusual thing to find a slim young man posing as a girl; in their case, their identity is not revealed, and their names on the programme are fanciful cognomens which give no indication as to sex. It may be remarked that a large proportion of these male impersonators of women are American or British, and but seldom French or Italian, or still more rarely German or Swedish.

In any case, whether the public is deceived, or "in the know," it expresses approval—or at all events, does not express disapproval—of the spectacle of a man dressed as a woman; which is perhaps a proof that ambiguity as to sex still continues to interest many people.

. . . . . .

Our task is now ended.

The author hopes that he may have contributed in some small degree towards the solution of some curious and interesting psycho-physiological problems; but he owns that his main purpose in writing the book was to amuse himself, and in so doing to amuse others, with some account of the strange "freaks" who, for various reasons, have assumed woman's garb, and lived in that disguise for many years.

So far as was possible, the personages about whom

BARBETTE

From a photograph lent by the Direction des Théâtres des Champs Elysées

we have written have been allowed to speak for themselves, as the reader can derive a better idea of their mentality from their correspondence or conversation than he could derive from the author's comments.

It is with a feeling of sadness that we lay down the pen. To write a book is like making a pilgrimage—there is some sorrow mingled with the satisfaction of having accomplished the task; and it is not without regret that we end "a pleasant prattle of past days."

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